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BY

ROBERT BELL,

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OETICAL WORKS

OF

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

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VOLUME I

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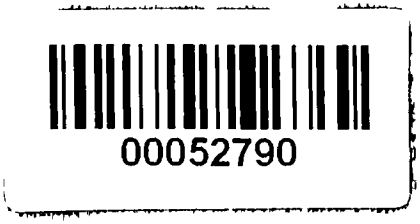
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ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS edition of Chaucer's works includes all the poems which appear entitled, from internal or external evidence, to be considered genuine. Wherever a necessity has arisen, the value or authenticity of the evidence has been investigated in the preliminary notices.

The obscurity in which the literary history of the fourteenth century is buried, renders it impossible to determine the dates of the poems; and any attempt at chronological arrangement would, consequently, be imperfect and illusory. Tradition, in some instances, supplies a ground of conjecture; and in others, particular circumstances indicate generally the period of authorship. But the information obtained from such sources is vague and incomplete. Thus it may be assumed, for several reasons, that *The Court of Love*, of which no MS. is known to exist, and which was first printed by Stowe, with many apocryphal pieces, in 1561, was one of Chaucer's earliest productions. The *Troilus and Creseide* may be assigned to his youth for similar reasons. It is tolerably certain, also, that the *Assemblee of Foules*, or, as it is called in one of the MSS., *The Parlement of Briddes*, had a direct reference to the marriage of the Duchess Blanche of Lancaster; and that *The Dreme of Chaucer*, more properly entitled *The Booke of the Duchesse*, referred to her death. An allusion to Queen Anne of Bohemia, in *The Legende of Good Women*, clearly places the date of that poem before the year 1382; and the enumeration it contains of other pieces shows that they belong to an ante-

cedent period. *The House of Fame* is supposed, from a particular passage, to have been written while Chaucer was Comptroller of the Customs, an office which he held from 1374 to 1386; but this supposition, even if it be well-founded, which is doubtful, fixes nothing more than the fact that the poem was written in the interval between these two years.

As it would be impracticable to construct a chronology of Chaucer's poems from such materials as these, his great work, *The Canterbury Tales*, has been placed first, in conformity with the example of previous editions; and the order of the remaining poems has been settled by considerations adverted to in the introduction to them.

The difficulty of obtaining accurate texts is familiar to all students of our early literature. Of *The Canterbury Tales* numerous MSS. are extant; of *The Romaunt of the Rose* only a single MS. is known to exist; and for other poems we are thrown back upon the corrupt editions of Speght, Stowe, and Urry, to extricate the text as well as we can from the speculative emendations, and worse oversights, of incompetent editors. The efforts which have been made in the preparation of this edition to attain purity, and to remove the obstructions that have hitherto impeded the popular extension of Chaucer's writings, may at least lay claim to the merit of zeal and untiring industry. It is hoped that, in the result, it will be found that no inconsiderable advance has been made towards the accomplishment of an object in which all scholars must feel an earnest interest; and which has demanded a course of inquiry, and an amount of minute and anxious labour, that cannot be adequately appreciated except by those who have been themselves engaged in a similar undertaking.

The researches that have been made in our mediæval literature since Tyrwhitt's time, and the vast accessions of knowledge we have derived from recent investigations into the language of Chaucer's age, materially facilitate the progress, and curtail the toil, of an Editor who fully avails himself of the means placed within his reach by his predecessors and contemporaries. These important advantages have not been overlooked in this edition. Every source from which useful assistance could be obtained has been sedulously consulted; and as the final aim of the edition is to popularize information, and not to make an idle display of learning, the acquisitions thus procured will be found distributed over the notes and introductions in the places to which they apply, and which they immediately illustrate.

The plan of explaining in the introductions to the poems all the points relating to the text, to the variations of MSS., and to mooted questions of authenticity, while it has the effect of scattering the testimonies of the diligence bestowed upon the work, possesses this obvious benefit for the reader—that it supplies him with all requisite information at the moment he wants it, instead of compelling him to recur to a preliminary dissertation, in which it would have been more convenient for the Editor to have collected his authorities into an imposing group. In these introductions, and the illustrative notes, all details will be found that are necessary to a complete elucidation of the history and character of the poems.

Several objects have been kept in view in the notes, which called for more ample exposition than they had hitherto received; especially the verification of Scriptural allusions, the frequent references to the theology and ecclesiastical affairs of the middle ages, old customs and manners, the vestiges of some of which still survive in modern ceremonies,

and remote districts, and the explanation of all passages that might be supposed to present a difficulty to the general reader from their involved structure, or their obsolete idiom.

The Glossary which terminates the volumes has been compiled with a special view to the poems of Chaucer; but from the comprehensiveness of its design, it will be equally available as a guide to the works of the writers of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and even of a later period. The stores of provincial dialects which have been latterly thrown open, and the labours of Urry, Gross, Nares, Tyrwhitt, Halliwell, and, indeed, most of the philologists who have explored our mediæval language, or traced the descent of our modern English, have been laid under contribution to render the Glossary as complete as existing materials will permit.

I cannot commit these volumes to the press without acknowledging how largely I have been indebted to the kindness and cordial aid of others. This acknowledgment is especially due to my friend the Rev. John Mounteney Jephson, who has rendered to me, and the public, an important service in the notes on *The Canterbury Tales*, and in the more material parts of the Introduction. The variety of his attainments, and the influence of his cultivated taste, will be felt in all those places which the reader may consider best entitled to critical approbation. To my friend, Thomas Wright, Esq., I also owe an acknowledgment for many valuable suggestions during the progress of the work, and for constant sympathy and ready counsel under all circumstances of difficulty. It is needless to say how highly I estimate the assistance I have received throughout from the last, and incomparably the ablest, editor of Chaucer.

R. B.

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GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

1328—1400.

REMEMBERING how little is known of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, we cannot be surprised at the scantiness of the information we possess concerning Chaucer, who flourished two hundred years before the Elizabethan period. When we consider, indeed, the remoteness of his age, and the long interval of darkness that followed, it becomes rather matter for surprise that we should possess so much. This information is derived from two sources: authentic documents, and certain passages in Chaucer's writings, supposed to contain allusions to his own life.[1] The materials collected from the latter source are, of course, purely conjectural. Some of Chaucer's biographers accept them without hesitation—others exclude them altogether.[2] In the following outline, the infe-

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[1] These allusions occur in *The Court of Love*, and *The Testament of Love*.

[2] The principal biographers of Chaucer are—1. Leland. 2. Speght, 1598. 3. Urry, 1721. This biography was not written by Urry, having been prefixed to the folio after his death; but his name is used in referring to it, to identify the edition. 4. Tyrwhitt, 1775-8. 5. Godwin, 1803. 6. Sir N. H. Nicolas, 1845. Of these, the first three are, upon the whole, the least reliable for facts. Leland, who lived nearest to Chaucer's time, and whose commission of investigation in the archives of the religious houses opened up much general information, abounds in mistakes. Speght deals largely in statements unsustained by proofs. Urry, who exhibits pains in the structure of his narrative, blends the speculative and the true in such a way as to render his labours comparatively valueless. Tyrwhitt was the first who reduced the biography to the few historical items that were capable of documentary verification, rejecting all the rest. Godwin added several new particulars; but his voluminous work is so overlaid with conjectural matter that it cannot be consulted with safety, except for its criticisms, which exhibit taste and discrimination.

rences that have been drawn from the works of Chaucer are carefully distinguished from the facts that are supported by historical evidence; and the grounds are stated which either entitle them to notice, or justify their rejection.

The birth, birth-place, parentage, and education of Geoffrey Chaucer are involved in obscurity. According to a tradition, which cannot now be traced to its origin, he was born in 1328. Leland, his first biographer, speaks of him throughout as if he were born much later; which would seem to be confirmed by a deposition made by Chaucer himself in 1386, when he was cited as a witness in a cause of chivalry between Lord Scrope and Sir Richard Grosvenor. In this document, Chaucer avers that he was then of the age of '40 and upwards,' which would fix his birth about 1343 or 1344; but as the depositions of the other witnesses on the same occasion are extremely lax and inaccurate respecting their ages, the averment can be considered only as a matter of form, not intended to convey any more definite term than that the witness was, more or less, upwards of forty. Sir Harris Nicolas shows that the deposition is not to be relied upon, in consequence of the remarkable mistakes made in the ages of other deponents, 'some of whom are stated to have been ten, and others even twenty years younger than they really were.' We know by the inscription on Chaucer's tomb, erected in 1556 by Nicholas Brigham, a poet and man of erudition, that he died in 1400; and, as we learn incidentally from his own writings, and those of Gower and Occleve,[1]

The biography by Sir N. Harris Nicolas is the most complete and authentic. Sir Harris strictly confines his narrative to facts extracted from the public records, many of which had escaped his predecessors, and points out clearly the erroneous inferences and suppositions that had been drawn from Chaucer's writings.

[1] That Chaucer had attained a considerable age at the time of his death is placed beyond doubt by decisive testimonies. Gower, in 1392-3, speaks of him as being 'now in his dayes old;' Occleve, lamenting his death, apostrophises him—'O maister deere and fadir reverent;' terms, says Sir Harris Nicolas, 'long used to indicate respect for age, and for superiority in any pursuit or science;' Chaucer alludes to himself as being 'olde and unlusty:' and Leland says that

that he lived to an advanced age, probability, in the absence of exact authority, favours the traditional date of 1328, which would make him seventy-two at the time of his death.[1]

A passage in *The Testament of Love* is supposed to determine the city of London as his birth-place,[2] and would be conclusive of the fact if other particulars, drawn from the same source, and proved to be erroneous, had not thrown suspicion upon the authority. Of his family nothing is known; and it would be idle to repeat the speculations that

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he 'lived to the period of grey hairs, and at length found old age his greatest disease.' The well-known portrait, painted by Occleve from memory (Harl. MS., 4866), agrees with these descriptions, and represents Chaucer with grey hair and beard, and features bearing evident traces of old age. In another portrait, found in an early, if not contemporary, copy of Occleve's poems in the Royal MS., 17, D. vi., he also appears very old, holding, as in Occleve's portrait, a string of beads in his left hand.

[1] 'The birth of Chaucer, in 1328,' observes Tyrwhitt, 'has been settled, I suppose, from some inscription on his tombstone, signifying that he died in 1400, at the age of 72.' This 'supposition' has been adopted as a matter of fact by Mr. Singer and others; but there is no evidence whatever in support of it. No record of such an inscription has been discovered. The date of 1328 was first stated in print by Speght, but upon what grounds does not appear. In the deposition made by Chaucer in 1386, he says that he had then borne arms for twenty-seven years. This places the commencement of his military career in the year 1359, when, assuming him to have been born in 1328, he was thirty-one years of age. As most men who bore arms entered the profession at a much earlier age, the fact tends to discredit the date of his birth assigned by *Speght*, although the inference cannot be considered conclusive. On the other hand, the age indicated by the deposition is itself discredited by several circumstances. If, as generally assumed, Chaucer produced his *Parliament of Birds* and his *Dream* in 1358 and 1359, we must believe, according to the deposition, that he wrote them when he was not more than fourteen or fifteen, and that he was, as Godwin observes, at that early age the confidential friend of John of Gaunt; suppositions which are quite incredible. He must also, at fourteen or fifteen have served under Edward III., in France, which, although not an unusual age for entering the military service, is at least improbable in the case of Chaucer, who may be presumed, at that period, to have been engaged in the studies by the fruits of which he afterwards became famous.

[2] 'Also the citye of London, that is to me so dere and swete, in which I was forth growen; and more kindly love have I to that place than to any other in yerth, as every kindly creture hath full appetite to that place of his kindly engendrure.'—*Testament of Love*, book i., § 5.

have been raised upon several persons of his name[1] who lived in the early part of the fourteenth century. Leland asserts that he was of noble family; Speght thinks that he was the son of a certain vintner who lived at the corner of Kirton-lane, and left all his property to the church; Pitts says that he was the son of a knight; Hearne that he was a merchant; and Urry conjectures that he was the son of one John Chaucer, who attended Edward III. to Flanders and Cologne. It is certain that he received the education of a gentleman; and it is no less certain that his family were neither noble nor distinguished, although there is sufficient reason to conclude that they were wealthy and respectable.

It has been inferred from an allusion in one of his early poems[2] that he was educated at Cambridge. The authority is doubtful, as the poem is a pure fiction, and bears no evidence of having any personal application. Leland says he was of Oxford, and that he finished his studies at Paris.[3] Other biographers reconcile these statements by supposing that Chaucer was of both universities; but Sir Harris Nicolas observes that 'there is no proof, however likely it may be, that he belonged to either.' Yet there is nothing improbable in the assumption that Chaucer went first to Cambridge and

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[1] Urry says that the name (variously given as Chaucier, Chaucieris, Chaussier, Chausir, &c.) is originally French, and signifies a shoemaker. Tyrwhitt says that it rather means *un faiseur de chausses ou culottiers*; and that, according to the old spelling, Chaucessir, it might be derived from *Chaufecire*, an office which still exists under the title of *chafewax*.

[2] My name, alas! my herte why makes thou straunge,
Philogonet I calld am fer and nere,
Of Cambrige clerke, &c.—*Court of Love.*

[3] Tyrwhitt is hardly just to Leland in saying that he assigns Chaucer's education to Oxford 'without a shadow of proof.' He may have had grounds for the supposition, and, probably, had, although he did not state them. Godwin discovers, in the dedication of *Troilus and Creseide* to Gower and Strode, both supposed to have been educated at Oxford, a reason for believing that Chaucer became acquainted with them there, the poem being one of his juvenile works. If Leland is to be credited, however, he made Gower's acquaintance, not at Oxford, but in the Inns of Court. Leland's story of Chaucer's travels into France to complete his education is entirely rejected by Tyrwhitt.

afterwards to Oxford. Such cases often occurred, not only in that age, but at much later periods. It must be admitted, at the same time, that there is no substantive evidence of the fact in this instance.

Under whatever auspices, or in whatever place, Chaucer studied, the extent of his acquirements is abundantly testified by his works, and the evidence of his contemporaries. He was well acquainted with divinity and philosophy, and the scholastic learning of his age, and displays in numerous passages an intimate knowledge of astronomy, and of most of the sciences as far as they were then known or cultivated. He is said to have originally selected the law as his profession, and to have been a member of the Inner Temple, where upon one occasion he was fined two shillings for beating a Franciscan friar in Fleet-street.[1] The statement, however, should be received with caution, as there is reason to believe that lawyers were not admitted to the Temple till long after Chaucer had devoted himself to other employments.[2]

Although it is impossible to trace the chronology of Chaucer's poems with any approach to certainty, there cannot be much hesitation in assuming *The Court of Love* and the *Troilus and Creseide* to have been amongst his earliest productions. Little confidence can be placed in the assertion, drawn from the poem itself, that the former was written in

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[1] This anecdote is related by Speght on the authority of Mr. Buckley, who, he says, had seen the record of it in the Inner Temple. Leland corroborates the fact of Chaucer having studied in 'the colleges of the lawyers,' but, as usual, with a singular confusion of dates, assigning the period to the latter end of the reign of Richard II., when Chaucer was not only an old man, but otherwise provided for, and extremely unlikely to begin the study of the law.

[2] Thynne, who compiled the first complete edition of Chaucer's works, says that 'the lawyers were not of the Temple till the latter parte of the reygne of Edward III., at which time Chaucer was a grave manne, holden in greate credyt, and employed in embassye.' When Edward III. died, Chaucer was forty-nine years of age, assuming that he was born in 1328. Mr. Singer observes that if it could be proved that Chaucer was a member of the Inner Temple, 'it would be sufficient evidence of his birth and fortune, for only young men of noble and opulent families could support the expense of this Inn.'

his eighteenth year;[1] but the opening may be considered conclusive of the fact that it was a juvenile piece.[2] *Troilus and Creseide* is placed first in the enumeration of his works by Lydgate, who expressly assigns it to his youth; a statement better entitled to credit than the announcement by the same authority that it was translated from 'a booke which is called *Trophe*,' or than Chaucer's own singular declaration that his original was a Latin author 'called Lollius.' No such book or author has ever been discovered to have existed; and the substance of the poem, which Chaucer amplified and altered, is to be found in the *Filostrato* of Boccaccio.[3] The date of *The Assembly of Fowls*, or, as it is elsewhere called, *The Parliament of Birds*, may be referred to the year 1358, upon the supposition, which appears to be generally admitted, that it was composed with reference to the intended marriage between John of Gaunt and Blanche of Lancaster, which took place in 1359, and which the lady is represented in the poem as deferring for a twelvemonth. From this circumstance, also, we gather the not unimportant fact that at this time Chaucer was on terms of intimacy with John of Gaunt. The poem called *The Dream* is supposed to have been written on the occasion of the nuptials.

The first authentic notice of Chaucer occurs in 1359, when it appears, upon his own authority, that he served under

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[1] When I was yong at xviii yere of age,
Lusty and light, desirous of plesaunce, &c.
Court of Love.

Upon this passage, which is clearly retrospective, Godwin assumes the poem to have been written in 1346, when Chaucer was eighteen years old.

[2] With timerous herte, and trembling hand of drede,
Of cunning nakid, bare of eloquence,
Unto the flour of port in womanhede
I write, as he that none intelligence
Of metres hath, ne flouris of sentence, &c.—*Ib.*

[3] Tyrwhitt confesses himself unable to explain 'how Boccaccio should have acquired the name of Lollius, and the *Filostrato* the title of *Trophe*;' but Godwin sees no difficulty in the case, and thinks it 'absurd to dispute the existence' of Lollius, of whom he avowedly knows nothing himself.

Edward III. in the expedition against France, upon which occasion he was made prisoner. At this period he is described as being 'of a fair and beautiful complexion, his lips full and red, his size of a just medium, and his port and air graceful and majestic.'[1] It is curious that in this year, 1359, when Chaucer was a prisoner in France, Godwin confidently assumes that he was residing at Woodstock; and cites, in support of this opinion, some descriptive passages which, he thinks, 'sufficiently answer to the geography of Woodstock-park.' Whether Chaucer ever resided at Woodstock, as most of his biographers assert, cannot be determined, for there is no proof of the fact; but it is evident that he could not have resided there in 1359.[2]

[1] This description is given by Urry from a portrait of Chaucer, painted at the age of thirty, and then (1721) in the possession of George Greenwood, of Chasleton, in Gloucestershire, Esq. The portrait is also mentioned by Grainger. Sir Harris Nicolas has collected an account of all the known authentic portraits. That, by Occleve, already alluded to, is the best yet discovered. It represents Chaucer with his grey beard bi-forked, in a dark-coloured dress and hood, a black case, containing a knife or pen-case, in his vest, his right hand extended, and a string of beads in his left. The portrait, also previously mentioned, in Occleve's poems, is a full-length, in black vest, hood, stockings, and pointed boots. A third portrait, in *The Canterbury Tales*, Lansd. MS. 851, dating within twenty years of the poet's death, is a small full-length inserted in the initial letter of the volume, in a long grey gown, red stockings, and black shoes fastened with sandals. Here the head is bare, and the hair closely cut. Sir Harris Nicolas refers to other portraits; but these appear to be the most authentic.

[2] Endless discussions might be raised on such passages as Godwin cites, leaving the question in the end exactly where it was in the beginning. More consideration is due to the authentic statement that a house, still denominated in deeds and legal instruments as 'Chaucer's house,' adjoins the principal entrance of Woodstock-park. But even the speculation which this fact would seem to warrant is set aside by Sir Harris Nicolas, who observes that this house 'was more probably the house of Thomas Chaucer, to whom the Manor of Woodstock was granted by Henry the Fourth, ten years after the poet's death.' This is the earliest evidence extant of any connection of the name of Chaucer with Woodstock. It is possible, no doubt, that the poet at some time resided at Woodstock, and that, consequently, it might have been selected as a gift to the son; but this kind of inference, whatever show of probability it may carry, cannot be allowed to possess any historical weight. Speght tells us that the square stone house near the park gate, called Chaucer's house, was passed under

At what time Chaucer returned to England has not been ascertained. It is probable that he was ransomed on the conclusion of the peace of Chartres in 1360, as there is ground for supposing that his marriage took place in that year.[1] Amongst the persons brought over to England in her retinue by Queen Philippa in 1328 was Sir Payne Roet, a native of Hainault, and Guienne King of Arms. This gentleman had two daughters: Katherine, who entered the service of the Duchess Blanche, the first consort of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster; and a younger daughter, Philippa,[2] who was taken into the royal household as one of the maids of honour. To this lady (who has been confounded by some writers with Philippa Picard, also one of the maids of honour) Chaucer was married; an alliance that subsequently brought him into the most intimate relations with John of Gaunt. In September, 1366, the Queen granted an annual pension of ten marks to Philippa Chaucer, which was continued to her by the King after her Majesty's death in 1369; when, being no longer in the royal household, she became attached to the person of the Duchess Constance, the second consort of John of Gaunt. In the interval her sister Katherine, having married Sir Hugh Swynford, a Lincolnshire knight, and become a widow, had returned to the Duke's service in the capacity of governess to the children of his former Duchess. While she was in this situation, Katherine Swynford is supposed to have yielded to the soli-

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that name by Queen Elizabeth to the tenant who then held it; and we learn from Urry that in his time there was a printed copy of Chaucer's works, with a Latin inscription on the first page, chained in the parlour.

[1] This is the date given by Tyrwhitt, but without reference to any authority. Sir Harris Nicolas shows that the marriage must have taken place at least before September, 1366.

[2] The name of Philippa was at that time much used in Hainault, 'in regard,' as one of the old biographers says, 'of its being the Queen's name.' Sir Harris Nicolas thinks it not unlikely that this lady's baptismal name was given to her from being the Queen's god-daughter. He speaks of her as being older than her sister Katherine. The early biographers, with greater probability, describe her as being younger.

citations of the Duke, who first made her his mistress, and afterwards married her. The Duke's regard for Chaucer and his wife was evinced by substantial gifts. In 1372, he conferred upon Philippa Chaucer a pension of 10*l.* per annum; and on different occasions presented her with valuable presents, besides bestowing other marks of his favour and protection on her husband and children.

In 1367, Chaucer was made one of the valets of the King's chamber; and in the same year the King granted him an annual salary of twenty marks for life, till he should be otherwise provided for, under the designation of 'dilectus Valettus noster,' which Selden says 'was conferred on young heirs designed to be knighted, or young gentlemen of great descent or quality.'[1] Chaucer appears to have been absent from England, on the King's service, in the summer of 1370; and towards the end of 1372 he was joined in a commission with two citizens of Genoa, for the purpose of determining upon an English port where a Genoese commercial establishment might be formed. An advance of 66*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* having been made to him on the 1st of December, on account of his expenses, he is supposed to have left England immediately after; and all that is actually known of his mission, observes Sir Harris Nicolas, drawing his information from the entries in the Issue Rolls, is that he visited Florence and Genoa, and that he certainly returned to England before the 22nd November, 1373, on which day he received his pension in person.

It was during his visit to Italy on this occasion that Chaucer is said to have visited Petrarch at Padua, a supposition derived from a passage in the Prologue to the *Clerk of Oxenford's Tale*, in which the narrator says that he

[1] There is much confusion in the early biographies in this matter. Urry says that Chaucer was soon after made Gentleman of the King's Privy Chamber, that an additional pension of twenty marks was bestowed upon him, and that he was subsequently appointed Shield-bearer to the King. The whole of these statements appear to have originated in the grant and appointment above-mentioned, which alone is sustained by evidence.

'learned' the tale of *Griselda* from a 'worthy clerk' at Padua, 'Fraunceis Petrark, the laureat poete.' If Chaucer had made this statement in his own person, which, undoubtedly, the structure of *The Canterbury Tales* afforded him the opportunity of doing, there could be no grounds for any discussion as to its truth; but having made it through the medium of a fictitious character, and not in his own person, the fact of such an interview having ever taken place has been called into question. Whether the reasoning founded upon the manner in which Chaucer thought fit to communicate the tale is sufficiently satisfactory to discredit the source to which he refers it, every reader must be considered competent to decide for himself. Upon this point, however, it may be well to observe that a distinction should be drawn between that which is given as fiction and that which is stated as reality; and that when Chaucer alludes to a real person in the introduction to the story, he so far departs from the dramatic assumption maintained in the rest of the prologue. As it is clear that the Clerk of Oxenford, being purely an imaginary personage, could not have learned the story at Padua from Petrarch, the difficulty becomes narrowed to a choice of two very obvious alternatives:—we must believe either that the whole statement is an invention, for which no intelligible reason can be assigned, and which is, certainly, on the face of it improbable; or that Chaucer himself obtained the story from Petrarch.

Several circumstances tend to strengthen this latter conclusion, which acquires additional force from the absence of a single particle of evidence against it. Petrarch was at Arqua, near Padua, when Chaucer is known to have been at Florence. There was nothing to prevent Chaucer from visiting Petrarch; while, on the other hand, it is extremely likely that he would have desired such a meeting. That his visit to Padua should not be found recorded in the Issue Rolls cannot be alleged as a ground of doubt, because the Rolls mention none of the places he visited except Florence and Genoa, to which cities he appears to have gone on the

business of his mission. The time when Petrarch made the Latin translation of the tale of *Griselda* from the *Decameron* (which translation is supposed to have furnished Chaucer with the story), cannot be fixed with precision; but it is needless to enter upon a discussion of dates which are not disputed, for the purpose of showing that the translation was made before the period of the supposed meeting. If Sir Harris Nicolas's opinion that Chaucer was not acquainted with Italian (an opinion which most readers of Chaucer's poetry will agree with Mr. Wright in rejecting), could be admitted to be well-founded, it would help still further to sustain the inference that Chaucer did not get the story from the *Decameron*, but from a Latin source, and, therefore, most probably, from Petrarch's translation. But it is not necessary to establish this inference in order to support the supposition that he procured the story from Petrarch. It does not seem very certain from the language of the Clerk that he obtained it from a translation, or from a writing of any kind, but rather from word of mouth. He tells us distinctly enough that he 'learned' it of a 'worthy clerk,' and again that 'this worthy man *taught*' him the tale. It is true that towards the conclusion of the tale he tells us that Petrarch 'writeth this storie,' a circumstance which does not invalidate the presumption that Chaucer may have learned it orally from Petrarch. Upon this point, a note (which has escaped the vigilance of Chaucer's biographers) made by Petrarch upon his translation, may be thought to possess some interest. Petrarch observes, in reference to the story of *Griselda*, that 'he had heard it many years before'—that is, before Boccaccio had made it the subject of one of the novels of the *Decameron*. As it thus appears that he was well acquainted with the story, which was, in all probability, a popular legend, he might consequently have related the substance of it to Chaucer, before he had made his translation of the novel, or before he had even seen the *Decameron*. The allusion by the Clerk of Oxenford to the fact that Petrarch had written the story, does not necessarily imply that Chaucer received it

in that shape; because *The Canterbury Tales* were not composed till many years after Petrarch's death, when the translation must have been generally known.[1] The omission, also, of all notice of Boccaccio, to whom Chaucer had been largely indebted, not only in *The Canterbury Tales*, but upon other occasions, although not in itself conclusive, is, at least, a suggestive element in the case. If Petrarch had communicated the story as having derived it himself from Boccaccio, it may be presumed that Chaucer would have made some reference to its original source. That he has not acknowledged his obligations to Boccaccio elsewhere is nothing to the purpose; for in those instances he makes no acknowledgment whatever, while here he goes out of his way to make an explicit avowal of his authority.

The only object of sifting such points as these is to exhaust the speculations that present themselves in the course of the inquiry, and to reduce a question of some literary interest to its exact limits. The result is clear and simple. There are no proofs that Chaucer and Petrarch met at Padua; nor is there, on the other hand, any constructive or collateral evidence, as to time, place, or circumstances, to show that such a meeting was impossible, or even unlikely. The fact rests altogether on Chaucer's own testimony, given in the person of the Clerk of Oxenford, and the precision of that testimony should not be overlooked in weighing the amount of credit to which it is entitled. The Clerk does not say in general terms that he obtained the story from Petrarch, but that he learned it from him at Padua. A statement so particular carries at all events the appearance of being intended to apply to an actual occurrence, and not to a fictitious incident.

The death of the Duchess Blanche in 1369 supplied Chaucer with the subject of his poem called *The Book of the Duchess*, known in the early editions by the less appropriate

[1] Petrarch died in July, 1374, and the earliest date assigned to *The Canterbury Tales* is subsequent to 1386.

title of *The Dream of Chaucer*. Mr. Godwin thinks that, from the tenor of this poem, 'we may conclude with certainty that Chaucer was unmarried when he wrote it;' a fact in which he is confirmed by the discovery that Philippa Picard, who, he says, was 'unquestionably' the wife of Chaucer, received a pension from the King in her maiden name in 1370, and, therefore, could not have been married to Chaucer till afterwards. This is a characteristic sample of the errors into which the imaginative biographers of Chaucer have fallen; errors which they frequently endeavour to support by trains of reasoning that commit them to still more extravagant hypotheses. Thus, in order to account for the singular circumstance of the daughter of Sir Payne Roet not bearing her father's name, Mr. Godwin informs us that it was very common in France for persons to have 'two' surnames (which there is no evidence whatever to show was the case with the lady in question), and that, consequently, brothers and sisters 'often exhibited in their ordinary signatures no token of relationship.' It is almost superfluous to observe that this statement, whatever it may be otherwise worth, is only a waste of ingenious speculation in reference to the Roet family, who were natives of Germany, and, therefore, not governed by the customs of France. Believing that he had found in Chaucer's poems some grounds for the opinion that the poet had been ten years a suitor to this Philippa Picard, Mr. Godwin thinks it necessary to explain why she did not marry him sooner; and then he proceeds to assign the reason. He takes it for granted that she could not have been indifferent to the pretensions of so accomplished a lover; 'but,' he adds, not in the language of inference or supposition, but as if it were an ascertained fact, 'she could not resolve to quit the service of her royal mistress.' The 'main topic of her objection,' however, having been removed by the death of the Queen, Mr. Godwin tells us that 'their nuptials were celebrated as soon as the general laws of decorum, and the ideas of female delicacy, would allow!'

The next authentic notice of Chaucer occurs in a writ dated 23rd April, 1374, granting him a pitcher of wine daily,[1] afterwards commuted into a money payment.[2] In the same year he was appointed Comptroller of the Customs in the Port of London, under strict conditions that he was to write the rolls of his office with his own hand, to be constantly present, and to perform all the duties in person, and not by deputy.[3] At the same time the pension of 10*l.*, which the Duke of Lancaster had conferred upon the poet's wife two years before, was converted into an annuity to both, to be held for life by the survivor, and to be paid out of the revenues of the Savoy. In 1375, Chaucer obtained a grant of the lands and custody of the son and heir of Edmond Staplegate, of Bilsynton, in Kent;[4] and also the custody of five 'solidates' of rent in Solys, in Kent, a matter of little pecuniary value.[5]

Soon afterwards we find Chaucer employed on two secret missions; in 1376 in the 'comitiva,' or retinue, of Sir John Burley; and in 1377 in association with Sir Thomas Percy (afterwards Earl of Worcester), with whom he proceeded to Flanders. The objects of these missions are not recorded;

[1] This grant has given occasion to a variety of speculations as to the circumstances under which it took place; but they may be dismissed as having no more claim to credit than Speght's report of Chaucer having been present in Milan with Petrarch, at the Duke of Clarence's marriage, in 1368—a circumstance of which no proof of any kind can be adduced.

[2] The money value of the grant may be estimated from the amount received in payment of the wine for a period of eight months from October, 1376, to June, 1377—7*l.* 2*s.* 6½*d.*; a large sum at that period.

[3] None of the rolls in the handwriting of Chaucer are known to exist; and the only record that has been traced having relation to his office is a grant to him, in 1376, of a sum of 71*l.* 4*s.* 6*d.*, being a fine levied on one John Kent, of London, for shipping some wool to Dordrecht without paying the duty, the attempted fraud having been apparently brought to light by the vigilance of Chaucer.

[4] It appears that this was a lucrative guardianship, the sum of 104*l.* having been paid to Chaucer for the wardship and marriage of the minor.

[5] A 'solidate,' according to Blount, was as much land as was worth a shilling annually; but Sir Harris Nicolas thinks there is great doubt as to its precise value.

but it is stated by Froissart that in the February of the latter year he was joined with Sir Guichard d'Angle (afterwards Earl of Huntingdon) and Sir Richard Strong to negociate a secret treaty for the marriage of Richard, Prince of Wales, with Mary, daughter of the King of France. Sir Harris Nicolas shows that Froissart has mistaken the dates and the circumstances. Chaucer was in Flanders in February with Sir Thomas Percy, and was in London in April, when he received a payment in person on account of his services, and was again despatched with a letter of protection to continue in force till the following August. In the June of this year Edward III. died, and his successor, Richard II., continued to Chaucer his annual grant of 20 marks, with an additional grant of the same amount, in lieu of the daily pitcher of wine. In January, 1378, he was joined with Sir Guichard d'Angle and others in the negociation for the King's marriage; and, returning in a short time to England, was sent in the month of May, with Sir Edward Berkeley, to Lombardy on an embassy, the precise nature of which is not known. Throughout the whole of these diplomatic engagements, for which Chaucer received regular payments, he continued to hold his office of Comptroller of the Customs; and as the condition of personal attendance had not yet been formally abrogated, we must infer that he received special permission to absent himself on these occasions.

Upon his departure for Lombardy, it was necessary that he should have two representatives 'to appear for him in the ourts;'[1] and the persons he selected were John Gower, the oet, and one Richard Forrester. This evidence of the long-anding friendship between Chaucer and Gower affords a ratifying confirmation of the personal regard they expressed owards each other in their works; and which we would illingly believe to have lasted to the end of their lives, notwithstanding that its dissolution some time before

[1] Sir H. Nicolas. It is not clear for what purpose, whether in reference to his office, or his private affairs.

Chaucer's death has been made a subject of discussion by Chaucer's commentators.[1]

Early in 1379 Chaucer returned to England; and nothing more is known of him, except that he continued to receive his pensions either in person or by assignment, till 1382, when he was appointed Comptroller of the Petty Customs in the Port of London, in addition to his former office. We learn further, from the researches of his last biographer, that in November, 1384, he obtained a month's leave of absence, on account of his private affairs, on which occasion a deputy was sworn in to perform his duties; and that in the following February he was finally released from the drudgery of personal attendance, by being allowed to appoint a permanent deputy.

Being now at liberty to consult his own inclinations, he turned his attention to political affairs, and was elected one of the representatives of Kent in the Parliament which met at Westminster on the 1st October, 1386. All circumstances concur in justifying the supposition that he entered the House of Commons for the purpose of supporting the ministers of the day, who were in the interest of his friend and patron, the Duke of Lancaster. The Parliament sat only a month; and its proceedings were directed with great violence against the

[1] The grounds upon which their friendship is supposed to have been interrupted will be found stated in the introduction to the *Man of Lawes Tale*, vol. ii. p. 9. The received notion that Gower was antecedent to Chaucer is entirely erroneous. It obtained currency from Dr. Johnson's hasty assertion that Chaucer was Gower's 'disciple.' The date of Gower's birth is assumed by Mr. Todd to have been about 1325; but it was probably several years later, as he survived Chaucer eight years. A short time before his death he undertook the revision of the *Confessio Amantis*, which he would scarcely have attempted had he attained the great age of 83. Nothing is known with certainty of his family. Caxton says he was born in Wales. All other authorities derive his extraction from the Gowers of Stittenham, in Yorkshire, now represented by the Marquis of Stafford; but Sir Harris Nicolas has clearly shown (*Ret. Rev*, N.S., ii. 103) that this statement is unfounded. He was evidently possessed of considerable property, although he was not a knight, as the old writers assert, and as the inscription of *armiger* on his tomb disproves. He was attached through life to the party of Thomas of Woodstock, and received from Henry IV. a collar, with a swan attached, which is represented on his monument in the church of St. Mary Overy (St. Saviour's), Southwark.

government.[1] There was little opportunity for displaying much zeal in the service of the Duke, whose influence was now rapidly declining; but Chaucer's known devotion to his cause was sufficient to bring him under the displeasure of the hostile advisers who soon afterwards obtained the confidence of the King. To this source may in part, if not altogether, be ascribed the reason of his dismissal in December, 1386, from both the offices he held in the Customs.

A commission was issued in November, 1386, to inquire into alleged abuses in the departments of the Subsidies and Customs; an investigation which seems to have led to no results. It is possible, but in the last degree unlikely, judging from subsequent circumstances, that Chaucer may have been dismissed in consequence of defaults in the discharge of his duties. It is much more probable, however, that his connexion with the Duke of Lancaster, and, to some extent, his attachment to the Duke's principles (although it is by no means certain that he entertained the same extreme views on ecclesiastical questions) mainly influenced this harsh measure. This conjecture is not incompatible with the entire rejection of that tissue of romantic adventure which has been drafted from *The Testament of Love* into the biography of the poet.

[1] It was during the sitting of this Parliament that Chaucer was examined as a witness on the right of Lord Scrope to the Arms 'azure a bend or,' in opposition to the claim of Sir Robert Grosvenor. As every personal anecdote relating to Chaucer deserves preservation, the concluding passage of his deposition will be read with interest. After stating that he had always heard that these arms belonged to the family of Scrope from time immemorial, and that he had seen Lord Scrope so armed in France, Chaucer replies to the interrogation as to whether he had ever heard of any interruption or challenge by Sir Richard Grosvenor or any of his ancestors? 'No; but he said that he was once walking in Friday-street, in London, and, as he was walking in the street, he saw hanging a new sign made of the said arms, and he asked what inn that was that had hung out these arms of Scrope? and one answered him, and said, No, sir, they are not hung out for the arms of Scrope, nor painted there for these arms, but they are painted and put there by a knight of Chester, whom men call Sir Robert Grosvenor; and that was the first time he ever heard speak of Sir Robert Grosvenor, or of his ancestors, or of any other bearing the name of Grosvenor.'

Assuming that fantastical composition to be a veritable auto-biography veiled under a shape of fiction, Chaucer is represented to have taken an active part in the struggle between the court and the city on the occasion of the re-election of John of Northampton to the mayoralty in 1382, and thus to have incurred the resentment of the government. John of Northampton, whose real name was Comberton, was one of the followers of Wickliffe, and a furious partizan of the Duke of Lancaster's; and he rendered himself so obnoxious to the clergy that his re-election produced a tumult, which it was necessary to subdue by force. Several lives were lost in the scenes that followed, and Comberton was arrested, and sent to prison in February, 1384. According to the narrative constructed from *The Testament of Love*,[1] process was issued at the same time against Chaucer, who effected his escape and fled, first to Hainault, the seat of his wife's family, and then to the island of Zealand, where he remained in exile for a period of two years. During this interval, he greatly diminished his finances by the liberality with which he treated some of his countrymen who had taken refuge in the same place under similar circumstances; and he was at last reduced to absolute want by the dishonesty of the persons to whom he had intrusted his affairs at home, they having, in

[1] *The Testament of Love* is an allegory written in prose, the heroine of which is a lady named Marguerite, who, notwithstanding that Chaucer typifies her as a pearl, and gives us to understand also that the name is intended to represent grace, virtue, wisdom, and holy church, is nevertheless addressed throughout as a woman, to whom the writer offers up his homage with a vivacity that cannot be mistaken for the expression of a merely spiritual sentiment. The ingenuity that extracted from this mystical composition a clue to a series of incidents which the most careful examination will fail to detect in what Chaucer himself calls the 'wimples and folds' of the allegory, is, perhaps, without a parallel. The real signification veiled under all this elaborate devotion—if it have any other signification than that which the title of the piece very plainly conveys—may be difficult, if not impossible, at this distance of time, to determine; but there can be no doubt that, whatever it means, it does not mean a confession of circumstantial personal details, and that the most conclusive evidence against the inferences drawn from *The Testament of Love* is furnished by *The Testament of Love* itself.

the circumstantial language of Mr. Godwin, 'cut off his supplies, and embezzled his income.' In this state of distress, he was compelled to return to England, was arrested soon after his arrival, and committed to the Tower, where he was detained for three years.[1] At the end of this time, early in May, 1389, Richard II. took the reins of government into his own hands, and, at the intercession of the Queen, Anne of Bohemia, Chaucer was pardoned, and set free, upon condition that he should impeach his former confederates; terms which, ignominious as they were, he submitted to for the sake of procuring his freedom. Mr. Campbell, speaking of this incident, pleads on behalf of Chaucer that however easy the lessons of uncapitulating fortitude may be outside the walls of a prison, they are hard when 'read by the light of a dungeon.' Before this plea in extenuation had been urged, however, it should have been ascertained what were the revelations made by Chaucer, and who it was he betrayed. Certainly not the Duke of Lancaster, and as certainly not John of Northampton, who received a full pardon from the crown in the following year. Yet it was assumed that Chaucer had turned approver against his associates, not only in the absence of a particle of evidence as to the confidence he violated, or the consequences of its violation, but in the face of the facts that at this very time his friends were restored to power, instead of being punished on his testimony, and that he was himself again taken into their favour and protection, instead of being discarded by them, as he must have been had he acted so basely. The most superficial examination of these well-known circumstances would

[1] The period of Chaucer's supposed misfortunes was made to correspond with well-known public events, in order to give it a colour of likelihood. John of Northampton was sent to Corfe castle in 1384; and in 1384 Chaucer is stated to have fled. The Duke of Lancaster, after an absence of three years, returned to England in 1389; and in 1389, after an imprisonment of three years, Chaucer is liberated. We thus see at once the whole machinery of dates and coincidences by the help of which the story was originally manufactured.

have enabled the writers who copied and retailed, and, in some instances, enlarged this story, to have detected its falsehood.

A complete refutation of the entire narrative is supplied by Sir Harris Nicolas, who shows that Chaucer was at large in London from 1380 to 1388, having throughout the whole of that period received his pension, half-yearly, at the Exchequer with his own hands. It is certain, also, that he held both his offices in the Customs up to December, 1384. In November, 1384, when, according to the narrative, he must have been in Zealand, he was obtaining permission to absent himself for a month from his duties; in the following February he was allowed to discharge his duties by deputy; and 'at the very moment,' adds Sir Harris, 'when he is supposed to have been a prisoner in the Tower, he was sitting in Parliament as a Knight of the Shire for one of the largest counties in England.'

Independently of these proofs, there are other grounds for rejecting the supposition that *The Testament of Love* had any reference to the affairs of this period. Although it is not possible to determine its date with certainty, we must infer, from the remarkable allusion made to it by Gower in the *Confessio Amantis*, that it was written several years after the time to which its subject and its composition have been assigned. Mr. Godwin, who asserts in one page that it was written in 1389, informs us in another that Chaucer had proceeded only as far as the sketch in 1393.[1] Of these irreconcilable statements, the former is mere conjecture, and the latter is founded upon the allusion in Gower, or rather upon a portion of it, for Mr. Godwin does not quote the whole

[1] '*The Testament of Love*, as appears from various allusions to the situation of the author in the course of the production, was written after Chaucer had given in his confession, *and before he was liberated from confinement*. It may, therefore, be referred to the month of June of the present year [1389.']—*Life*, iv. 48. 'The manner in which Gower mentions *The Testament of Love* is fortunately such as to evince that, in the sixteenth year of Richard II. [1393], the sketch only, and certain passages of the work existed.'—*Ib.* iv. 80.

passage, which is essential to the full intention of the poet.[1] The true interpretation of it would seem to be that Chaucer had not yet even begun *The Testament of Love*, and that these lines contain the first suggestion of the design. In the *Confessio Amantis*, Gower makes a confession of love, upon which Venus desires him to tell Chaucer to make *his* testament in the same manner, 'so that my courte it may recorde.' If Chaucer had made his testament already, we may presume that the reference to it would not have been so distinctly prospective. It is tolerably clear, also, from the way in which it is introduced, that *The Testament of Love* is really what it professes to be—a memorial of poetical devotion—and not what it has been assumed to be, a vindication of Chaucer's conduct in relation to public matters. The subject is proposed by Venus, who could hardly be called in to preside over the production of a political allegory; and it is as evident as such demonstration can make it, that the signification ascribed to the work by subsequent critics was unknown to Gower, the contemporary and intimate friend of its author.

In addition to the loss of his offices in 1386, Chaucer suffered a severe domestic misfortune in 1387 by the death of

[1] It occurs in Book vii., where Venus is introduced giving instructions to Gower, who has been making his shrift, or confession:—

'And grete well Chaucer, whan ye mete,
As my disciple and my poete,
For in the floures of his youth,
In sondrie wise, as he well couth,
Of ditees, and of songes glade,
The which he for my sake made,
The londe fulfilled is over all;
Whereof to him in speciall
Above all other I am most holde,
Forthy, nowe in his dayes olde,
Thou shalt hym telle this message,
That he upon his later age,
To sette an ende of all his werke,
As he which is myn owne clerke,
Do make his Testament of Love,
As thou hast done thy shrifte above,
So that my courte it may recorde.'
'Madame, I can me well accorde,'
Quod I, 'to telle as ye me bid.'

his wife. With certain exceptions which have not been accounted for, she received the pension settled upon her by Queen Philippa, and afterwards confirmed by Richard II., from 1366 to June, 1387; after which date no further notice of her name appears, so that it is supposed she died before her next half-year's payment became due. Of Chaucer nothing is known during the years 1387 and 1388, except that he regularly received his two pensions, and that in the May of the latter year they were both cancelled at his own request, and assigned to one John Scalby, to whom he had probably sold them under the pressure of distress.

The dismissal of Thomas of Woodstock, the King's uncle, and of Walsingham, the Chancellor, and their colleagues, in May, 1389, and the appointment of new ministers, one of whom was the son of the Duke of Lancaster, once more brought Chaucer's friends into power; and only a few months elapsed before they found an opportunity of advancing his interests. In July, 1389, he was appointed Clerk of the King's Works, embracing the Palace at Westminster, the Tower, the royal manors of Kennington, Eltham, Clarendon, Sheen, Byfleet, Childern Langley, and Feckenham, the lodges in the New Forest and the royal parks, and at the mews for the King's falcons at Charing Cross. This important office he was permitted to execute by deputy, and his salary was two shillings per diem. Payments made to him immediately after his appointment, show that he entered upon his duties at once; and the nature of the works in which he was engaged is exhibited in a commission dated 12th July, 1390, directing him to execute certain repairs at St. George's Chapel, in the Castle of Windsor. The cause of his retirement from this office has not been ascertained; but there is no doubt that he ceased to fill the situation some time in the course of 1391, as in the September of that year it was held by one John Gedney.

A long chasm now occurs in his history. Godwin supposes that he retired to Woodstock; and also that in March, 1391 (while he was yet Clerk of the Works), he wrote his *Con-*

clusions of the Astrolabie, addressed to his son, 'little Lewis.' The former supposition has been disposed of; and the latter, founded upon a date introduced into the treatise on the *Astrolabe*, to illustrate the working of two of the problems, is obviously untenable.[1] Of Chaucer's resources in the interval up to February, 1394, when he obtained a grant from the King of 20*l.* a year for life, nothing is known, except that he still enjoyed his pension of 10*l.* from the Savoy, and his wages as King's Esquire, the value of which, beyond an allowance of forty shillings half-yearly for robes, is doubtful. That he was reduced to great distress is sufficiently evident from numerous small loans which he obtained on his new pension, and which have been traced through the Issue Rolls by Sir Harris Nicolas down to the year 1398;[2] and from the fact that in May, 1398, the King granted him letters to protect him against arrest. In these letters it was set forth that his Majesty had appointed him to perform sundry arduous and urgent duties, and that, fearing he might be impeded in the execution of them by various suits, his Majesty took him under his special protection, forbidding any one to sue or arrest him on any plea, except it were connected with land, for a term of two years. Letters of this description were matters of form, in which, as in this case, the duties were sometimes a mere fiction to cover the real object of protecting the freedom of the recipient.

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[1] 'Ensample as thus. The yere of our Lorde a thousande, thre hundred, ninetie and one the xii. daie of Marche at middaie, I would knowe the degree of the sonne, &c.;' and again, 'The yere of our Lorde a thousande, thre hundred, ninetie and one, the twelveth daie of Marche, I would knowe the tide of the daie, &c.'—*The Conclusions of the Astrolabie*. From these passages Speght assumed that the treatise was written in 1391, an inference amplified more circumstantially by Godwin, who also takes it for granted, from a passing reference to the latitude of Oxford, that Chaucer must have been residing at the time in the neighbourhood of that city.

[2] The extremity of his circumstances is exhibited in the trifling amounts of some of these loans. On one occasion he borrowed 1*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.*; and on the 24th July, 1398, he applied, in person, at the Exchequer, for a loan of 6*s.* 8*d.*, and went again, a week afterwards, to solicit a similar sum.

Chaucer's pecuniary circumstances throughout the greater part of his life must have been ample for the maintenance of that position in society which his connections entitled him to hold; although it cannot be very readily believed, according to the construction put upon some passages in his works, that at one period he lived in great splendour, or that, according to Speght, he had altogether an income of one thousand pounds per annum. The fluctuations that took place from time to time in his resources, and the want of information as to the profits he derived from his various appointments, render the total amount of his income a matter of speculation. For many years previously to the death of his wife, his pensions yielded him about 40*l.* a-year, afterwards reduced, by the sale of his annuities, to 10*l.*, again raised, by a new grant, to 30*l.*, and finally increased, in the last year of his life, to about 62*l.* Assuming that his offices, especially with contingent advantages attached to them (of which we have an instance in the penalty levied on a defaulter in the Customs, and bestowed upon Chaucer), were more lucrative than his pensions, Chaucer's revenues, while he held his appointments, may be safely averaged at double these amounts.[1] It is not easy to ascertain what such an income ought to be rated at by the present value of money. The materials upon which the calculation should be founded are contradictory and perplexing; and the writers who have discussed the question differ so widely in the conclusions at which they have arrived, that they may be said to have complicated rather than diminished the difficulty. Godwin, who investigated the subject minutely, estimates the value of money in the fourteenth century as being equal to eighteen times the same amount in the nineteenth; Sir Harris Nicolas is inclined to reduce this estimate nearly one-half; while a comparison of the prices of articles of consumption in the two periods would

[1] Sir Harris Nicolas, properly anxious to avoid exaggeration, is content to set down Chaucer's offices at half the value of his pensions.

justify us in multiplying the nominal value of money in the fourteenth century at least thirty or forty times to bring it to the present standard.[1] We cannot, therefore, obtain any satisfactory results by a comparison between the conditions of the fourteenth century and those of the nineteenth; but some light may be thrown upon the inquiry by an examination of the relative conditions developed in the former period, without reference to the latter. Although we cannot determine with accuracy how much any given sum in Chaucer's time would represent in our own, we may form a sufficient estimate of Chaucer's circumstances from contemporary data.

The salary of the chief judges in the fourteenth century was 40*l.* a-year, and that of the puisne judges, with some variations, was 26*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* If, as has been conjectured, the judges had perquisites in addition to their salaries, these sums do not exhibit the full value of their offices; but they furnish, nevertheless, a clue to the relative circumstances of different classes. Maids of honour were pensioned with annuities equal to one-fourth of the salary of a puisne judge; the court physician received a pension of 100*l.* a-year, and an apothecary, who had attended the King in a dangerous illness, sixpence *per diem*. Sir Edward Montagu had a pension of 100*l.* a-year; and the Duke of Brabant of 1500*l.* Descending to the wages of the lower classes, as a further test of comparative values, we find that 1*d.*, 2*d.*, and 3*d.* a-day was paid to labourers and handicraftsmen—amounts much in excess of the ratio of payments made to persons in a higher station of life. The result, so far as Chaucer is

[1] Bishop Fleetwood's *Chronicum Preciosum* supplies the details of prices from which the comparison may be made. In 1336 wheat was 2*s.* a quarter, in 1359 it rose to the unprecedented price of 26*s.*, but in two years afterwards it fell again to 2*s.*, at which price it appears to have continued for several years. In 1389, barley was 1*s.*; and in 1390, a stone of wool 3*s.* The price of a fat ox in 1336 was 6*s.* 8*d.*, and in 1343 two oxen 16*s.* A cow 5*s.*, two hens 1*d.*, a hog 1*s.* 6*d.*, a horse about 40*s.*, a gallon of white wine 6*d.*, of red wine 4*d.*, and a ton of wine about 4*l.*, are amongst the prices quoted in Chaucer's time. The reader who desires to follow up the inquiry may be referred to Godwin's *Life of Chaucer*, ii. 329-38, and *The Retrospective Review*, ix. 189-90.

concerned, shows that, whatever may be the nominal value at which we should rate his income according to our standard, it was fully equal to the position of a gentleman in his own time. His pensions, exclusive of his offices, ranged for many years with the salaries of the Chief Baron of the Exchequer and the Chief Justice of the Common Pleas; and if we add to the income he derived from these sources as much more from the responsible employments in which he was engaged, we may reasonably conclude that, with the exception of the interval of reverse that ensued upon the loss of his offices and the sale of his pensions, he was for the greater part of his life in the enjoyment of no inconsiderable independence. The prosperity which had been interrupted by these circumstances happily returned to brighten the close of his career.

In 1398, another grant of wine was bestowed upon him—a ton annually, equal to about 4*l.* a-year; and in the following year Henry IV., the son of his deceased patron, the Duke of Lancaster, four days after he ascended the throne, conferred upon him a grant of 26*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* a year, in addition to the annuity of 20*l.* bestowed by Richard II. This grant is dated on the 3rd of October, 1399. Chaucer was now seventy-one years of age; and the royal bounty came in time to console the last year of his life.

It has been generally believed that Chaucer latterly resided at Donington Castle, near Newbury, in Berkshire. This tradition, acquiring various circumstantial embellishments in its descent, has been repeated by several writers;[1] but, even

[1] The earliest notice of Chaucer's residence at Donington occurs in Camden's *Britannica*. The reference is slight, and inexact. Speght copies it, and adds an allusion to an oak, which he designates as Chaucer's oak. Evelyn and Ashmole faithfully record the oak, the latter augmenting the stream of particulars by calling the poet 'Sir Geoffrey Chaucer,' and saying that he composed many of his celebrated pieces under the oak. Mr. Godwin improves upon these details by telling us that the Duke of Lancaster purchased the castle, and bestowed it upon Chaucer, being 'determined, in the feudal sense, to ennoble him!' although he elsewhere suggests that 'the circumstances of Chaucer himself might be considered as rendering it some-

if Chaucer's necessities throughout the period when he is supposed to have kept up that costly establishment were not conclusive against its probability, it is discredited by other circumstances. Donington Castle was built by Sir Richard Abberbury, who was in possession of it in 1392. It afterwards became the property of Sir John Phelip, the first husband of Chaucer's grand-daughter. This gentleman died in 1415; and there is no evidence of any previous connexion of any member of Chaucer's family with Donington Castle, nor is there any ground for supposing that Sir John Phelip's tenure commenced till after Chaucer's death. Upon the subsequent marriage of Sir John Phelip's widow, it passed into the possession of her second husband, the Duke of Suffolk.

The story of a residence in Berkshire is further shown to be groundless by the ascertained fact that Chaucer was unquestionably living in London during the last three years of his life, and that on Christmas Eve, 1399, he entered upon the lease of a house in Westminster for a term of fifty-three years at the annual rent of 2*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* Had he been residing in Berkshire, it is not likely that at his advanced age he would have come up to London, and encumbered himself with another establishment. The tenement was situated in the Garden of the Chapel of the Blessed Mary of Westminster, said to be very nearly the same spot on which Henry the Seventh's Chapel stands; and it was demised to Chaucer by Robert Hermodesworth, a monk, with the consent of the Abbot and convent of that place. The stipulations of the lease provided that if the rent ran into arrear for fifteen days, the lessor should have power to distrain; and that if the tenant died during the term of the lease, the premises should revert to the Custos of the Chapel. The latter contingency happened within the first year of the occupancy of the tenement. Chaucer died on the 25th October, 1400, at the age of seventy-two, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

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what improbable that he had made such an acquisition toward the close of his life.'

We have an interesting evidence of the tranquillity and resignation of Chaucer's last hours in the little poem beginning—

Flie fro the prease, and dwell with soothfastnesse,

which he is said to have composed on his death-bed;[1] and if the concluding passage of *The Canterbury Tales* may be considered genuine, Chaucer not only looked back with regret upon certain parts of his writings, but expressed his desire to suppress them in some formal retraction, of which no trace has been recovered.[2] He is said by some writers to have been buried in the Cloisters,[3] and afterwards removed to the Chapel, but this statement is shown to be erroneous by Caxton. The following lines, from an epitaph by Stephanus Surigonius, of Milan, were originally inscribed on a slab placed on a pillar near his grave:[4]—

Galfridus Chaucer vates, et fama poesis
Maternæ, hac sacra sum tumulatus humo.

In 1556, the present monument of grey marble was erected by Mr. Nicholas Brigham, with the subjoined inscription, now nearly defaced, and a full-length of Chaucer, the head, costume, and attitude of which are taken from Occleve's portrait:—

M. S.
QUI FUIT ANGLORUM VATES TER MAXIMUS OLIM,
GALFRIDUS CHAUCER CONDITUR HOC TUMULO;
ANNUM SI QUÆRAS DOMINI, SI TEMPORA VITÆ
ECCE NOTÆ SUBSUNT, QUÆ TIBI CUNCTA NOTANT.
25 OCTOBRIS 1400.
ÆRUMNARUM REQUIES MORS.
N. BRIGHAM HOS FECIT MUSARUM NOMINE SUMPTUS
1556.

[1] The poem is entitled, *Gode Counsaile of Chaucer;* and in a MS. in the Cottonian library the following words were found inserted before the title:—'A Balade made by Geffrey Chaucer upon his dethe bedde leying in his grete angnysse.' Upon this authority the statement rests. The MS. (Otho, A xviii.) on which it was written was destroyed by a fire in which many volumes of the Cottonian library were consumed.

[2] See note at the end of *The Canterbury Tales.*

[3] Fox's *Acts and Monuments.*

[4] Leland says they were put up by Caxton, at whose request they were written. The statement of the erection of a tomb earlier than that placed over the grave by Mr. Brigham is not entitled to credit.

Attached to the tomb, probably on a ledge of brass, were these verses, which have long disappeared:—

> Si rogites quis eram, forsan te fama docebit
> Quod si fama negat, mundi quia gloria transit
> Hæc monumenta lege.

Chaucer had two sons, Thomas and Lewis, the latter, to whom the treatise on the astrolabe was addressed, is supposed to have died in his youth. The former married Matilda, the second daughter and co-heiress of Sir John Burghersh, by whom he acquired large estates in Oxfordshire and other counties. In addition to grants and offices conferred upon him by John of Gaunt, he was appointed Chief Butler to Richard II., a situation which he continued to hold, with a short intermission, under the three succeeding sovereigns. Henry IV. appointed him Constable of Wallingford Castle, and Steward of the Honours of Wallingford and St. Valery, and of the Chiltern Hundreds; and the Queen granted him the farm of the manors of Woodstock, Hauburgh, Wotton, and Stonfield, with the hundred of Wotton, which, after her Majesty's death, the King confirmed to him for life. He represented Oxfordshire in Parliament for several years between 1402 and 1429, and was chosen Speaker of the Commons in 1414; and in the same year was appointed Commissioner to treat of Henry V.'s marriage with Katherine of France. He was present at the battle of Agincourt, and served in most of the expeditions under Henry V. In the following reign he was appointed a member of the King's Council; the Duchess of York selected him as one of her executors; and several notices occur of the important employments in which he was engaged. He died in 1434. His only child, Alice, was married, first to John Philip, who died without issue, and afterwards to the Duke of Suffolk (attainted and beheaded in 1450), by whom she had three children. She died in 1475, and, adds Sir Harris Nicolas, from whose careful biography these particulars have been collected, her issue

having failed, the descendants of the poet are presumed to be extinct.[1]

The most authentic description of the person of Chaucer is that which is given in the words of the host of the Tabard, when he calls upon him for his story. It may be inferred that at this time Chaucer had grown somewhat corpulent, as the host, who was 'a large man,' banters him upon having a waist as well shaped as his own; but it is evident that his features were still small and fair, and wore that thoughtful expression which is conspicuous in his portrait. The host also notices his habit of abstraction, which is again alluded to in *The House of Fame*, where he is described sitting at his book till his look becomes dazed. In company he seems to have been retired in his manner, and, as may be gathered from several allusions, to have been generally absorbed in contemplation. Although, he tells us, he lived 'as a hermit,' he hints that he by no means practised abstinence when he went into society. The mixture of gravity and sweetness in Occleve's portrait conveys the perfect image of a character not less remarkable for its rare combination of power and sympathy, than for the variety of accomplishments by which it was graced.

[1] The eldest son of the Duchess of Suffolk married the Princess Elizabeth Plantagenet, sister of Edward IV., whose eldest son, created Earl of Lincoln, was declared by Richard III. heir apparent to the throne, in the event of the death of the Prince of Wales without issue; 'so that,' observes Sir Harris Nicolas, 'there was strong probability of the great great grandson of the poet succeeding to the crown.' The Earl of Lincoln was slain at the battle of Stoke in 1487.

INTRODUCTION.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER is properly designated the Father of English Poetry. He acquires his right to that title not only on the ground of being our earliest poet, but because the foundations he laid still support the fabric of our poetical literature, and will outlast the vicissitudes of taste and language. His greatest contemporaries and successors have recognized and confirmed his claim to this distinction. Lydgate calls him the 'chief poete of Bretayne,' and the 'lode-sterre' of our language, and says that he was the first to distil and rain the gold dewdrops of speech and eloquence into our tongue; Occleve calls him 'the fynder of our fayre langage;' Roger Ascham describes him as the 'English Homer,' and considers 'his sayinges to have as much authority as eyther Sophocles or Euripides in Greke;' and Spenser speaks of him as 'the pure well-head of poetry,' and 'the well of English undefiled.' Poet, soldier, and diplomatist, and master of the philosophy, science, and divinity of his time, the versatility of his genius is not more remarkable than the practical judgment he displayed in its employment. With a complete command of the springs of universal interest, the tragical and the humorous, the solemn and the gay, the sublime and the grotesque, he applied his knowledge of life and nature, his consummate art, the copious resources of an imagination that seemed incapable of exhaustion, and a power of expression as extensive as the empire of his genius, to the creation of works which, while they reflect in vivid colours the features of his own time, possess also an enduring value for all time to come. This is not the least striking aspect of the labours of a poet who flourished five hundred years ago, before books

were printed, or a reading public existed. Others who have written since, in a spirit and an idiom more accessible to the popular understanding, have passed into oblivion; but Chaucer still keeps his place. The modes and usages he portrayed have long since vanished; yet his pictures retain their original freshness and fascination. The language in which he wrote has long ceased to be the language of the people; yet the eager student conquers its structural difficulties with delight to enter upon the treasures it throws open to him.

The peculiar interest of Chaucer's poetry arises not only from its intrinsic merit, but from the singularly clear and full idea it conveys of a state of society for which modern experience furnishes no parallel, while, at the same time, it is pregnant with elements of thought which exert an influence even in our own day. A close observer of character, and of all those fugitive traits that mark and indicate its individual peculiarities, Chaucer has adopted in *The Canterbury Tales* a plan that enables him to depict almost every class of society, and which also combines in itself the various kinds of composition employed as the vehicles of popular beliefs and feelings in the Middle Ages. From his works may be learned much more satisfactorily than from the chronicles of his contemporaries, or the more elaborate compilations of later historians, the modes of thought, habits, and manners which prevailed in the reigns of Edward III. and his immediate successors; the era in which the Norman and Saxon races became fused, and our language and social institutions assumed forms that have descended with some modifications to the present time. A strong government had at length secured internal peace; the supremacy of law over brute force was established; a native literature was initiated; and commerce and the arts of life began to flourish. Society was preparing for an advanced stage in its progress; the old traditions were insensibly losing their ascendancy; and new views and principles were in course of development. These mutations are reflected with extraordinary fidelity in

Chaucer's poetry; nor can we obtain elsewhere so close a view of the immediate effects they produced.

The special character of the middle ages may be traced to the national peculiarities of the Northern races who supplanted the Roman Empire, and set up their stronger and less corrupt barbarism on the ruins of the ancient and decayed civilization. Classical literature, embodying the old idolatry, with all its hideous crimes and abuses, its Eleusinian mysteries and gladiatorial games, was swept away by the victorious hordes, as being unfit for the study of Christian men, and unworthy of their more manly taste. To supply its place they set about the task of forming a literature of their own; assigning a paramount importance to metaphysical investigations, and, above all, to inquiries into the nature of the Deity and the human soul, and their relations to each other. In such studies the Teutonic mind found a congenial pursuit, and displayed an unrivalled subtlety.

The schoolmen, adapting their themes to the predominant work of the age, lectured earnestly to thousands of students, who found in the universities and monasteries retreats where alone they could enjoy repose and security. Here Abelard, Thomas Aquinas, and Duns Scotus devoted themselves to abstruse speculations; while outside the cloisters society was convulsed by the interminable wars of the great feudal vassals, who, although acknowledging a common suzeraineté, were in fact sovereigns within their own territories.

Poetry was one of the natural products of this state of things. Familiarity with the scenes of violence incidental to such circumstances furnished abundant materials, which the imagination, nurtured in solitude, idealized into those lyrical ballads and metrical romances which constituted the popular lore of the middle ages. There was then no printing press to multiply and disseminate the creations of the muse; and oral recitation anticipated the advent of the broadsheet and the book. Hence the banquets of the nobility and the merrymakings of the lower orders were always enlivened by the presence of the minstrel, jongleur, gestour, gleeman,

or minne-singer, who, like the reciters of the Homeric ballads, related in poetical diction, and to a musical accompaniment, the exciting achievements, perilous adventures, and chivalrous loves of their heroes.

Songs and metrical legends marked the infancy of this great movement; but as mental education advanced, the metaphysical and religious tone of the age created a demand, even at these festal entertainments, for disquisitions on the properties of spiritual essences and the grounds of moral duty. Thus, as we learn from Erasmus in his Treatise on Preaching entitled *Ecclesiastes*, the jongleurs, who rapidly caught up every new phase of progress and opinion, dexterously varied their lighter subjects by the delivery of discourses, committed to memory, on topics of the highest import, such as the mystery of the Trinity, and other fundamental doctrines of the Church. Nothing, indeed, strikes the student of mediæval literature with so much surprise on his first acquaintance with it, as the remarkable manner in which Christianity enters into and directs all the ideas of the people of those ages. That particular form in which they embodied their faith is found interwoven with all their social relations, and regulating even their mode of counting time, their business, and their amusements. A religion so deeply seated in the daily details of life became inevitably corrupted by popular superstitions. The universal belief in the supernatural, in the power of Divine grace, in the reality of the conflict continually going on between good and evil, and in the direct interference of Providence on the side of virtue, is evinced in the predilection for those religious fictions which represented faith and unbelief, Christianity and error, under a masquerade of actual personages. Most of the legends of the Saints are evidently pure allegories, invented by lecturers for the purpose of impressing particular points of theology on the minds of their pupils, in the manner of a *memoria technica;* and even when founded on real circumstances, they were varied by each succeeding narrator according to his own fancy, or the instruction he desired to convey.

Turning to the reverse of this picture, we find, as might be expected, that the relaxation of the people whose minds were thus highly strung took a direction of singular grotesqueness. They endeavoured to relieve the absorbing interest of the subjects that mainly engrossed their thoughts by contemplating them in ludicrous, and, sometimes, incoherent combinations. Their chief pastimes consisted in the burlesque of their gravest convictions. This is not the form in which the gaiety of frivolous minds ever displays itself. The well-bred, and easy, and even serious licentiousness of Wycherley's comedies delighted the courtiers of Charles II.; but the age of Bernard, and Thomas Aquinas, and Francis of Assissi, sought a vent for its hilarity in the extravagant drolls of the 'boy-bishop' and the 'Abbot of Misrule.' Coleridge profoundly observes, that 'farce,' which is one form of the grotesque, 'often borders on tragedy,' and that it 'is nearer tragedy in its essence than comedy is.' The close alliance, in the middle ages, between the profoundest speculations and the broadest absurdities forcibly illustrates the truth of his remark.

It seemed desirable to glance at these characteristics as a necessary introduction to the consideration of the structure and aims of *The Canterbury Tales*, in which the several species of poetry indigenous to the mediæval period, are not only combined and exemplified, but exhibited in a dramatic form which brings out the express features of the recitations of the gestour. The tale of chivalry, the moral and theological treatise, the legend of the Saints, the covert satire, and the humorous apologue, are all reproduced in his pages, treated, however, with a taste and power which will be looked for in vain amongst the merely popular poems of that, or, indeed, of any other, age.

In Chaucer's poetry we have a true image of these varieties, brought to perfection by a genius that transcended its originals. His method of proceeding in *The Canterbury Tales* is the most effective that could be devised for transmitting to subsequent ages an accurate expression of the

social and moral development of his own. He never generalizes—he never falls into disquisitions—he never draws conclusions. He avoids all modes of treatment that might afterwards become wearisome or unintelligible; and, descending into the common life of the day, he shows us, as it were, the spirit of transition in actual operation amongst the different classes of the people, modifying their customs and opinions, drawing out into full play the salient points of the national character, and colouring even individual peculiarities to the most trivial details, which, in this aspect, acquire a special historical value. The humanity he thus imparts to his subjects invests them with a permanent interest, which neither the lapse of time, nor the revolutions of language, can impair or render obsolete; and the instruction which, in another shape, would become dry and heavy, is here made to assume the most attractive forms.

In no respect is he a more faithful interpreter of the spirit of the time than in his manner of treating ecclesiastical questions. The reign of Edward III. was the harbinger of the great ecclesiastical revolution of the sixteenth century. Not only the acts passed in this reign, the statutes of Provisors and of Mortmain, but the petitions presented by the Commons against the interference of the Pope in the internal management of the Anglican Church, are indications of the formation of a strong party whose object was to effect a reaction in resistance to the excessive temporal power which circumstances had thrown into the hands of the clergy. With this party, sustained by the zeal and power of John of Gaunt, the King's younger son, Chaucer was intimately connected by family ties. It consisted of the high nobility, and such of the middle classes as were swayed by their example or authority. The Crown, on the other hand, sought to strengthen itself by a close alliance with the heads of the church, especially the religious orders, from among whom its ministers were chosen, and through whom it wielded a complete control over the lower classes of the population. A reference to Richard of Devizes, Geoffrey of Vinsauf,

Mathew Paris, and others of our old chroniclers, now within the reach of all readers, will abundantly confirm this position. The King's party consisted chiefly of the monks, with their extensive granges and farms, tilled and inhabited by stout yeomen, the very pith and marrow of our militia; and the friars, secure of a ready access to every cottage and conscience in England; both recruited from the lower and middle classes, and both comprising in their ranks men who, from their education, were skilled not only in theology, but in the arts of diplomacy and administration. Such was the only body in the state upon whose services the sovereign could rely as a check upon the feudal barons, whose efforts were, of course, always tending towards the establishment of a pure aristocracy. This tendency the Crown was obliged to counteract by playing off one great feudal vassal against another, and the clergy against all—a policy which, in the end, made the clergy hateful to all. John and Henry III., indeed, attempted to play the political game of chess without their knights and bishops, but were check-mated.

The aristocratical party was naturally opposed to the ascendancy of the clergy, and neglected no opportunities of arraigning their conduct, in the hope of ultimately forcing the Crown to select its ministers from among the feudal barons themselves. In these assaults upon the clergy, John of Gaunt and his supporters derived important assistance from Wickliffe, whose tenets—that tithes and episcopacy are unlawful, that subjects are not bound to obey princes who are living in a state of mortal sin, and that patrons ought to resume church property from clergymen whose lives or doctrines they disapprove—were found to be powerful weapons in political warfare.

Chaucer's connexion with John of Gaunt, therefore, explains much of his treatment of ecclesiastical persons in his poetry; his bantering censure of the monks and friars, the most learned, and influential, and best organized body of churchmen, and, consequently, the most troublesome to his party; and

his praise of the poor, and, comparatively, illiterate and isolated country parsons, from whom it had nothing to fear. Yet, notwithstanding the gusto with which he turns the religious orders into ridicule, there is no indication of his having embraced the tenets of Wickliffe. It has been thought that in his character of a country parson he intended to record his admiration of that active reformer; but there is not a single point of resemblance between them. Chaucer's model parson is not a controversialist; he disclaims all school-learning; he lives upon his benefice, and occupies himself with the care of his parishioners; he does not hold sinecures in cathedrals; and he delivers an orthodox discourse upon the sacrament of penance according to the orthodoxy of the times. Wickliffe's life displays a very complete contradiction to all this. He was everything that the parson was not, and the reverse of everything that he was. He was a bold and indefatigable controversialist; he was Professor of Theology and Warden of Canterbury Hall, Oxford; he held the living of Lutterworth, and a prebendal stall in the collegiate church of Westbury; and he denied the sacramental efficacy of penance, and the expediency of confession to a priest. The antagonism is perfect; and if Chaucer meant to apply the sketch to Wickliffe, it must have been as a masked sarcasm and not as a panegyric.

The English language, like everything else at this period, was exhibiting signs of change. Old forms were beginning to be disused, and new elements to be introduced into its structure. The notion that Chaucer was the first who adopted French forms and idioms is founded on a slight acquaintance with previous, or contemporary, literature. That the pure Saxon lingered for a long time among the lower orders in remote districts is shown by our provincial dialects of the present day, which still retain incontestable traces of a Saxon origin; and by the no less striking fact that most of our current household terms, and the names of most articles of utility, are derived from the same source, while the bulk of the class of words that represent luxuries and superfluities come from the

Norman stock. The foundations of the language, so to speak, are Saxon, and its graces French. In Chaucer's time, and long afterwards, this distinction was much more clearly defined than it is now; the general diffusion of education, and the modern facilities of intercourse, having swept away the landmarks that formerly separated the different classes of society, and isolated the different sections of the kingdom. It may be said, in a broad sense, that when Chaucer wrote there were two languages—the language of the Court, and of educated people; and the language of the lower orders. The contrast between them was not that which exists between refinement and vulgarity, or even between knowledge and ignorance; it was of a radical character, and entered into the formation of both. We find the two languages more or less influencing the English style down to the reign of Henry VIII.; and furnishing the key by which we can at once understand why contemporary writers should appear to belong to different ages, and why Surrey should be perfectly intelligible in our day, while Skelton cannot be read without the help of a glossary.

Chaucer's language is that of the good society in which he lived, and into which a large accession of Norman blood, usages, and idioms had been infused. That in availing himself of these advantages, and not affecting the archaisms of the lower orders, he did wisely for his own fame, and for the advancement of his native language, need not be insisted upon. The carpenter who should choose to do his work with the axe alone, when he might also have the assistance of a plane and saw, would not display much fitness for his vocation.

'It may be doubted,' observes Coleridge, 'whether a composite language like the English is not a happier instrument of expression than a homogeneous one like the German. We possess a wonderful richness and variety of modified meanings in our Saxon and Latin quasi-synonymes, which the Germans have not. For 'the pomp and *prodigality* of heaven,' the German must have said the '*spendthriftness*.'' The

actual process of enriching our language by the naturalisation of the Norman and the Anglo-Saxon, and the gradual rejection of the original forms of both, is palpably developed in the writings of Chaucer, where we find the ancient inflections and the modern simple form frequently used indifferently in the same line. The modern word is thus at once referred to its French or Anglo-Saxon original by the peculiarities of its structure or pronunciation. A full exposition of the subject would in effect amount to the compilation of a grammar; but it will be sufficient for all present purposes to remark that the final letter *e*, the doubling of consonants, and other particulars in which the orthography differs from that of the present forms are by no means arbitrary, though not always strictly maintained, and that their omission in some cases, where they ought properly to be found, is to be attributed to the carelessness of copyists, or to the incipient use of the simpler forms, or to the exercise of a poetical licence for the sake of the metre. To these causes of confusion Chaucer himself adverts in the *Troilus and Creseide*:—

> And for there is *so great diversite*
> *In English*, and in writing of our tongue,
> So pray I God that none miswrite thee,
> Ne thee *mismetre* for defaut of tongue—

words which imply that even in his own time the metre of his poetry depended upon some nicety of orthography and pronunciation—one, amongst many reasons, why any attempt to substitute the modern for the ancient orthography is incompatible with the preservation of the metre and the structure of the language. A few instances will give the reader a general idea of the nature of these changes and inflections, which the smallest acquaintance with German will enable him to apply in almost all cases.

To begin with substantives: they are in many instances inflected in the oblique case and plural number, as in German; and where, in Anglo-Saxon, they ended in *a*, they end in *e*, pronounced; as, for Anglo-Saxon *hunta* (hunter) Chaucer writes hunté. In the mouths of the lower characters

especially the Anglo-Saxon form of the first person singular is preserved; as *so the ich*, sometimes written *so theech*, so may I thrive. This is German. *Thou* takes the form of an affix to the verb, as seistow, sayest thou, canstow, canst thou. For *it*, the Anglo-Saxon form, *hit*, is sometimes used; for she (German, *sie*), *scho*, which is the Anglo-Saxon form *heo*, with a hissing aspirate; for her, *hir*, the final *e* of the Anglo-Saxon being dropped; for their (German, *ihr*) hiré, which comes nearer the Anglo-Saxon *hira*. The forms *wha* and *whilk*, for who and which (Anglo-Saxon, *hwa*, *hwylc*; German, *welcher*), are used provincially by the Yorkshire *clerks*: *swilk*, a derivative from *whilk*, for such. The adjective appears to be sometimes inflected both in words of Anglo-Saxon and in those of French origin. Thus (vol. i. p. 74), *smale* is the plural form of the adjective *smal* (Anglo-Saxon, *smæl*, singular; *smæle*, plural.)

But it is in the verb that the old inflections are chiefly preserved; differing, indeed, in many respects from the Anglo-Saxon, and being often dropped altogether, as in the modern forms. Thus (vol. i. p. 74), *slepen* is the plural of the Present indicative of *to slepen*, and *seeken* the infinitive of the verb; but in three lines further on we have an approach to the modern form in the dropping of the final *n* in the word *wende* (old form *wenden*); and *for to seeke* (old form *seeken*). A remarkable example of this occurs where *seyde* rhymes to *leyden*, showing that the final old and new forms were sometimes indifferently used or omitted in writing, and were probably much sooner dropped in speaking. The termination *n* of the plural of the Present indicative differs from the Anglo-Saxon, which ends in *ath*; but this form is retained in some cases, as in vol. i. p. 147. *You liketh* (unless this be put for *if you liketh*), and again, *ye loveth*. The imperative always ends in *eth*. What is the exact force of the particle *y* prefixed to the verb seems now impossible to discover. It is generally the sign of the Past participle, as from *clepen*, to call, we have *yclept*, called; as in German, from *loben*, to praise, *gelobt*, praised. But in German, Anglo-Saxon, and

in Chaucer's English, these analogous particles are prefixed to some verbs throughout their moods, while they evidently form no part of the root. Mr. Wright has noticed, as a caution against conjectural emendations, the errors in orthography into which Tyrwhitt has been betrayed by his ignorance of the inflections of the irregular, or, more properly, the strong verbs, in the Teutonic languages. For instance, in the verb to give, the imperfect singular is *he gaf;* plural, *they gave* (old form *gaven*); in such cases, Tyrwhitt has invariably used the plural form with a subject in the singular. It will be seen that these inflexions are identical with the German. The reader will also remark the German form *sch*, for which *sh* has been substituted in modern English. The inflexion of the regular verb in the imperfect is, for example, I lernede, thou lernedest, he lernede. Plural, lerneden; but the final *n* is often omitted. *Geben* to give, *Ich gaf*, I gave, *Wir gaben*, we gave.

The reduplication of the final consonant and the addition of the letter *e* is the adverbial form; thus, *longe* or *lange* occurs as an adverb of time formed from the adjective *long*, *withinne*, and *inne*, as the adverbial form of the preposition *within* and *in*. *Needes*, necessarily, and *thankes*, gratuitously, are examples of the mode of forming adverbs from substantives.

But though the foundation and construction of the language is purely Teutonic, it was in Chaucer's time assimilating many Anglo-Norman words. It had not yet acquired the strong accentuation of the modern English, which, Erasmus says, makes foreigners suppose when they hear us speak that we are barking. The modern German is accented much more evenly than the English; and the genius of the French language is to accent all syllables equally; but if there be any emphasis at all it is on the last syllable. This rule is strictly applicable to all words of French origin in Chaucer. Thus, the following words, and all of like derivation, must be pronounced as marked; corâge, viâge, visâge, mariâge; honoûr, adventûre, mysaventûre, armûre, clamôur;

condítioún, questioún, resón; maniér, matiér, coursér; hazárd, plesaúnce, remembrance; torménd, &c. The final *é* of the feminine adjective in French is also in some cases retained, as Seynte Frideswide.

In short, the construction and pronunciation of the languages which were then undergoing the process of amalgamation were still in a great measure retained; but they already showed symptoms of change, that change consisting chiefly in the dropping of the terminations, in accordance with the principle which then began to show itself in our idiom, of throwing back the accent as far as possible. The final syllable, when it did not form part of the root, would thus be at first pronounced slightly, next dropped altogether from pronunciation, and would finally disappear from the written language. Latin and Greek have undergone the very same process in their transformation into Italian and Romaic.

Intimately connected with the orthography and pronunciation is the vexed question of the rules of Chaucer's metre. The two theories on this subject are thus stated by Mr. Hallam in his *History of the Literature of the Middle Ages*:—'It had been supposed to be proved by Tyrwhitt, that Chaucer's lines are to be read metrically, in ten or eleven syllables, like the Italian, and, as I apprehend, the French of his time. For this purpose it is necessary to presume that many terminations, now mute, were syllabically pronounced; and where verses prove refractory after all our endeavours, Tyrwhitt has no scruple in declaring them corrupt. It may be added that Gray, before the appearance of Tyrwhitt's essay on the versification of Chaucer, had adopted without hesitation the same hypothesis. But, according to Dr. Nott, the verses of Chaucer, and of all his successors down to Surrey, are merely rhythmical, to be read by cadence, and admitting of considerable variety in the number of syllables, though ten may be the more frequent. In the manuscripts of Chaucer the line is always broken by a cæsura in the middle, which is pointed out by a virgule; and this is pre-

served in the early editions, down to that of 1532. They come nearer, therefore, to the short Saxon line, differing chiefly by the alternate rhyme, which converts two verses into one. He maintains that a great many lines of Chaucer cannot be read metrically, though harmonious as verses of cadence. This rhythmical measure he proceeds to show in Occleve, Lydgate, Hawes, Barclay, Skelton, and even Wyatt, and thus concludes that it was first abandoned by Surrey.'[1] However ingeniously this theory may be stated, most people will agree with Mr. Hallam in the opinion that it is founded on too narrow a definition of metre. He justly observes that in Chaucer's versification 'we never fail to recognize a uniformity of measure, which the use of nearly equipollent feet cannot, on the strictest metrical principles, be thought to impair.' If an exactly equal number of syllables in every line be essential to metre, Homer and Virgil's hexameters and the song of *Comus* are not metrical; a conclusion so contrary to all received notions as to induce a suspicion that there is some fallacy at the bottom of Dr. Nott's theory. If we go back to first principles, it will not be difficult to discover where this fallacy lies.

The object of all metre is to produce a rhythm, or cadence, to which the voice in reading or singing can adapt itself. This regular cadence may be produced by making the verses consist of an exactly equal number of syllables with the accent falling on the even ones, to which plan Dr. Nott would confine the term *metre*. But it may be much better produced by composing the verses of an equal number of equipollent, though not equisyllabic, feet, a principle upon which all the classical metres are founded. Nobody who can enjoy Milton's exquisitely musical rhythm will ever believe that his manner of composition was to count the syllables on his fingers. As Mr. Hallam well observes, the occasional occurrence of an anapest in the place of an iambus, so far from derogating from correctness, adds great spirit and

[1] *Introduction to the Literature of Europe*, vol. i. p. 420.

beauty to the metre. He might have included in the same category a still greater irregularity, the substituting one strongly accented syllable at the beginning of a line, or at the cæsura, for an iambus, which, so far from being a defect, is an aberration that imparts wonderful spirit and beauty to the song of *Comus*—

> The star that bids the shepherd fold
> Now the top of heaven doth hold, &c.

In the second of these lines the word *Now* takes the place of an iambus. In short, it may be laid down as a principle of all metres that the number of accented syllables in lines intended to correspond with each other admits of no irregularity; but that unaccented syllables may be grouped round them, as it were, of course within certain limits, of which the ear is the best judge. This is also the principle of the Anglo-Saxon metres as shown by Professor Erasmus Raske in his valuable *Anglo-Saxon Grammar*, and, it may be added, of all metres whatsoever, though some admit of greater variety in the number and arrangement of the unaccented syllables than others.

It has been seen that Dr. Nott lays much stress upon a virgule being found in the manuscripts to mark the cæsura, as a proof that the verse is not metrical. But this virgule is a musical, and not a metrical, sign, and was intended as a guide to the singer to mark where the first strain of the recitative ended, and the next began. It was used for this purpose in the Latin Psalms, formerly sung in churches, and its place is supplied in the *Book of Common Prayer* by a colon. Its use is an interesting example of the manner in which poetry was formerly sung; and it signified nothing more. But even if it had been intended to mark the cæsura, or pause, the regularity of its recurrence would not have been inconsistent with the metrical structure of the verse. In many classical metres, as pentameter and Sapphic, the place of the cæsura never varies; it varies least in Pope, whose metre is more regular than that of any of our poets, and most in Milton, the melody of whose verse depends

chiefly upon his cadence, or rhythm; and, notwithstanding the virgule, many passages might be quoted from Chaucer in which great spirit and vivacity are obtained by the judicious variation in the position of the cæsura.

It would carry us far beyond our present purpose to enter at length upon the question raised by Dr. Nott's use of the terms metre and rhythm, except so far as it concerns the verse of Chaucer. Dr. Nott's object was to prove that Surrey was the first English poet whose versification was governed by syllabic laws, and that the versification of all preceding writers was unrestrained by any syllabic laws whatever. This position is perfectly clear and intelligible; and constitutes, in fact, the real point at issue. But the subject assumes a new aspect when Dr. Nott calls the former species of versification metrical, and the latter rhythmical. The objection to his employment of these terms is, that they are illogical, because they do not express the *essential difference* between the two species. That there is a difference is obvious; but these terms describe a distinction without a difference, unless it is to be admitted that metre can be produced without rhythm, or rhythm without metrical principles of some kind. It is unnecessary to repeat, that metre and rhythm are by no means identical, or convertible, terms, and that they express different things; but the things they express co-exist, and cannot be separated from each other.

The inquiry in which we are immediately interested, however, may be easily liberated from these artificial difficulties. Accepting the terms in a limited sense, metre as a test applicable only to syllables, and rhythm as a test applicable only to sounds, the question resolves itself into a simple form: Is Chaucer's poetry metrical or rhythmical? The answer is, that it is both. We find in Chaucer not only the most perfect examples of strict syllabification, but, by a careful attention to the grammatical structure of his language, we shall find that strict syllabification is the rule, and not the exception, of his verse.

The regularity of the strictly syllabic lines is much

more apparent throughout than the art with which the lines, not governed by syllabic quantities, are made to preserve their true rhythmical proportions. The number of long accented syllables in these cases is invariable; but the number of unaccented syllables constantly fluctuates without impairing the melody of the verse. In other words, an anapæst, or other equivalent foot, often occurs, and sometimes, perhaps, an emphatic monosyllable takes the place of an iambus; and a hypercatalectic, or redundant short syllable, is frequently found at the end of a line.

In stating these to be the only irregularities in Chaucer's verse, it should be understood that he must be read like French or German, and the final letter *e* pronounced, although not always. The ear must here be the guide as in French verse. For example, in the two following lines of Boileau the final *e* is pronounced in the word *fertile*, but is quiescent in the words *rare* and *ignore*, because the succeeding word begins with a vowel:—

> Rare et fameux esprit, dont la fertile veine
> Ignore en ecrivant le travail et la peine.

But in every case, every syllable of words of French extraction, such as *condicioun* must be pronounced, and the accent laid on the last syllable. This is the origin of what has been called by modern metrists the *female* rhyme.

The best way to make Chaucer's system of versification plain to the reader will be to give a few examples of his different metres, and to mark the syllables with the usual long and short signs.

The heroic verse which Chaucer probably first introduced into English, is the prevailing one in *The Canterbury Tales*. In the spirited address of Theseus to Emily in the *Knightes Tale*, most of the peculiarities mentioned above will be found to occur.

> Sŭstȳr, | qŭoth hē, | thĭs ĭs | mȳ fŭl | ăssēnt,
> Wĭth āll | thăvȳs | hĕer ōf | mȳ pār | lĕmēnt;
> Thăt gēn | tĭl Pā | lămōn, | yŏur ōw | nĕ knight,
> Thăt sĕrv | ĕth yōu | wĭth hēr | tĕ, will | ănd mĭght,

And ĕvĕr | hăth dōon, | sȳn fērste | tȳme ȳe | hĭm knēw,
Thăt ȳe | schŭl ōf | yŏur grāce | ŭpōn | hĭm rēwe,
And tāke | hĭm fōr | yŏur hūs | bŏnd ānd | fōr lōrd;
Lĕrne mē | yŏure hānd, | fōr thĭs | ĭs ōure | ăccōrd.

* * * * *

Bĕtwīx | hĕm wās | ĭmānd | ănōn | thĕ bōnd,
Thăt hĭgh | tĕ mā | trĭmōyn | ōr mā | rĭāge,
Bȳ ālle | thĕ cōun | sĕil ōf | thĕ bā | rōnāge.

In these lines are examples of a foot of three syllables, *and ever*, supplying the place of an iambus; of the final *e* pronounced, and quiescent, as it suits the metre; and of the word *mariage* pronounced as in French. If the following verse be not corrupt, which there is no reason to suppose, the word *than*, an emphatic syllable, at the beginning of a line, does duty for an iambus, as already noticed:—

Thān | ĭs ĭt | wĭsdōm | ăs thēnk | ĕth mē.

In another verse we have an example of the emphatic word *day* occurring, instead of an iambus at the cæsura:—

Ovēr | thĕ whĭch | dāy | thĕy māy | nŭt pāce.

With exquisite perception of the properties of verse, the poet has chosen for pathetic subjects a modification of the Italian *ottava rima*, which differs from its original in wanting the fifth line. In this verse are composed *Griselde*, *The Legend of St. Cecilia*, *The Tale of the Prioress*, *Troilus and Creseide*, and most of the smaller compositions called ballads. The following example is Constance's touching address to the Virgin, which seems to have suggested Ellen's prayer in *The Lady of the Lake*.

Mŏdēr, | qŭod shē, | ăud māy | dĕ brīght, | Mărīe,
Sōth ĭs | thăt thūrgh | wŏmmān | nēs ēg | gĕmēnt
Mānkīnd | wās lōrn, | ănd dāmp | nĕd āy | tō dȳe,
Fōr whĭch | thȳ chīld | wās ōn | ă crōss | tō-rēnt;
Thȳn blĭs | fŭl ey | ghĕn sāwh | ăl thĭs | tōrmēnt;
Thĕn nȳs | thĕr nōon | cŏmpā | rĭsōun | bĭtwēne
Thȳ wŏ, | ănd ū | nȳ wōo | măy mān | sŭstēne.

The only subject for remark here is that the genitive inflection in *womannes* forms a separate syllable, and that *Marie* and *torment*, being French words, are accented on the last syllable.

In the envoye to the tale of *Griselde* is to be found a kind of verse which does not occur in any of the other poems. It consists of six heroic lines rhyming alternately, except the fifth, which has no corresponding rhyme. *The Monke's Tale* is written in a stanza of eight lines, of ten syllables, but very different from the *ottava rima*. The versification of the burlesque on the metrical romance, which the host calls 'rhyme doggerel,' is very commonly met with in poems of that period, and was probably rejected by Chaucer as monotonous and tiresome.

It has been observed that large portions of the *Tale of Melibeus*, though written like prose, are, in fact, blank verse, and may be so read, as in the following example:—

> This Melibeus answered anoon and said,
> What man, quoth he, should of his weeping stint
> That hath so great a causé for to weep?
>
> * * * *
>
> Prudence answeredé, Certes well I wot
> Attempered weeping is no thing defended
> To him that sorrowful is, &c.

This is, perhaps, the earliest example of blank verse in this metre in the English language; and it is not the less remarkable because it becomes thus resolved out of prose.

The only remaining kind of metre that claims our attention is that of *The Romance of the Rose*, *The House of Fame*, *Chaucer's Dreame*, and *The Book of the Duchess*. All these are in the verse called octosyllabic, but more properly quadrameter iambic, inasmuch as anapæsts, hypercatalectic syllables, and other irregularities in the number of syllables are of frequent occurrence. In structure and irregularity it resembles the song of *Comus*. The following admirable delineation of the frank and simple manners of a high-bred woman of fashion is taken from *The Book of the*

Duchess, and was intended as a portrait of Blanche, the consort of John of Gaunt.

Thĕretō | hĕr lōke | wās nōt | āsīde,
Nĕ ŏvĕr | thwārt būt | bĕsēt | sŏ wēle,
It drēwe | ānd tōoke | ŭp ēve | rў dēle
Āll | thāt ōn | hĕr gān | bĕhōld,
Hĕr ēy | ĕn sēmed | ānōn | shĕ wōld
Hăve mēr | cў, (Fōl | lў wēn | dĕn sō;)
Būt ĭt | wās nĕvĕr | thĕ rā | thĕr dō.
It nās | nŏ cōun | tĕrfēit | ĕd thīng;
Ĭt wās | hĕr ōw | nĕ pūre | lōkĭng.[1]

The text of Chaucer, which next claims our attention, has, until lately, been considered hopelessly corrupt. His great popularity in some degree contributed to this result. Manuscript copies of his poems were eagerly multiplied in an age when the orthography and pronunciation of English were capricious and unsettled; and each succeeding copyist thought himself at liberty to adapt the original to his own notions of correctness, or to the dialect of his native district. From copies made on these principles were derived the texts of the early editions by Caxton, in 1475, by Wynken de Worde in 1495, by Pynson, Stowe, Thynne, and Speght, who showed, alike by their neglects and their errors, that they were utterly incapable of discriminating between a true and a false reading; and the confusion arising from their incompetence was worse confounded by Urry's conjectural emendations. The next and most successful attempt to render *The Canterbury Tales* popular was made by the late Mr. Tyrwhitt, whose first edition appeared in 1775. His learning, judgment, and patient research, formed a happy contrast to his predecessors. So far as the text was concerned, however, his plan was injudicious. He collated a great number of MSS., but without sufficient attention to their dates, an

[1] The text above used is taken from one of the printed editions, and is probably very incorrect.

indispensable consideration in reference to the language of Chaucer. He appears, also, to have attributed to the early editions by Caxton a degree of authority to which they have no title.[1] In other respects his labours were of unquestionable utility. He rejected ignorant interpolations, made an excellent arrangement of the *Tales*, and in his Dissertation and Notes, notwithstanding that they were founded on an impure text, and an imperfect knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon and Mediæval English, he produced a body of illustra-

[1] Caxton's first edition of *The Canterbury Tales* was one of the earliest books printed in England. As a specimen of typography it is remarkable for clearness and elegance; but the text is valueless, being taken from a MS. abounding in errors. Caxton afterwards brought out a second edition printed from a better MS. in the possession of Mr. William Thynne. Neither of these editions are dated. The first is supposed by Ames to have been printed about 1475 or 1476; the second appears from the preface to have been undertaken six years later. Of the former, only two copies are known to exist; and only one of the latter. *Troilus and Creseide*, *The Book of Fame*, and other pieces were also printed by Caxton. In 1495, Wynken de Worde printed an edition of the *Tales*, founded upon Caxton; the *Troilus and Creseide* in 1517; and the *Assemblee of Foules* in 1530. Richard Pynson published two editions of the *Tales*, the first without a date (conjectured to be 1491), and the second, containing additional pieces, in 1526. He also printed the *Troilus and Creseide*, and *The Book of Fame*. The next edition, collected by Mr. William Thynne, and published by Godfray in 1532, was the first that contained the entire works, with the exception of *The Plowman's Tale*, and was adopted as the basis of most of the subsequent editions. It was reprinted, with the addition of *The Plowman's Tale*, by John Reynes, in 1542. This was followed, in 1561, by an edition, 'with divers addicions,' edited by Stowe. Speght's edition, the most complete that had appeared up to this time, was published in 1598, and reprinted, enlarged and improved, in 1602, and again in 1687. Urry's edition appeared in 1721. *The Canterbury Tales*, 'from the most authentic MSS., and as they are turned into English by the most eminent hands, &c.,' were published in 1740, by Dr. Thomas Morell. This is the edition to which Mr. Tyrwhitt gives the date of 1737, and of which he availed himself largely in his notes and glossary. Mr. Tyrwhitt's edition was published in 1775 8. A second edition was printed by the University of Oxford in 1798; a third in London in 1822; and a fourth in 1845, with a new life by Sir Harris Nicolas, who also edited the rest of the poems. Mr. Wright's edition was originally printed by the Percy Society in 1847; and afterwards republished for general circulation. This catalogue includes only the principal editions. Many other editions appeared in the sixteenth century, but they are for the most part mere reprints.

tive information that must always be valuable to the student.

Mr. Wright, applying the vastly increased resources of modern criticism and philology to the text of *The Canterbury Tales*, has made an important advance in this fundamental particular beyond his predecessors. His plan was exactly the reverse of Tyrwhitt's. Instead of founding his text upon a comparison of MSS. written at different times, and in different places, and frequently corrupted by different dialects, he selected the best manuscript he could find, that which seemed nearest to Chaucer's own time, and most free from clerical errors, and adopted it as the basis of his edition. This MS., a remarkably fine one in the British Museum, he thus describes: 'The Harleian MS., No. 7334, is by far the best MS. of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* I have yet examined, in regard both to antiquity and correctness. The hand writing is one which would at first sight be taken by an experienced scholar for that of the latter part of the fourteenth century, and it must have been written within a few years after 1400, and, therefore, soon after Chaucer's death. The language has very little, if any, appearance of local dialect, and the text is in general extremely good, the variations from Tyrwhitt being usually for the better.' Collating this MS. carefully throughout with another, the next in age and value, No. 851 in the Lansdowne collection, and also, as far as *The Wife of Bath's Tale*, with two MSS. in the public library of the University of Cambridge, Mr. Wright was enabled to produce a text which, in accuracy and completeness, supersedes all former editions. The reader who is acquainted with Chaucer only through the pages of Speght, or Urry, or even Tyrwhitt, will be surprised to learn, upon consulting Mr. Wright's volumes, how much he has hitherto lost of the true spirit of the poet, and how much he has yet to discover. He will here find minute shades of meaning, and happy turns of expression, which are frequently dependent on the insertion or omission of a letter, brought out with force and perspicuity; obscurities of structure cleared up; and the

language and versification restored to their original purity. In the Harleian text, we almost instinctively feel that we have Chaucer before us as he really wrote; the orthography and inflections, instead of being a heap of confusion, appear, indeed, in a state of transition, but are generally under the government of grammatical rules, easily traceable in our present English, with a slight assistance from the old and modern Teutonic dialects; the laws of the metre gradually unfold themselves as we advance; and the beauty, power, and variety of the style, no longer clouded by errors, become fully apparent.

With such a text as this before the public, it would be inexcusable to fall back upon the old blunders, or to waste the time of the reader in a discussion of the perplexities they occasioned. What is required in a new edition is that it should at least embody the latest acquisitions, and reject exploded fallacies and errors. It may be claimed with some confidence for the present edition of Chaucer's poems that these objects have been constantly kept in view. The text here given of *The Canterbury Tales* is mainly founded upon the Harl. MS. selected by Mr. Wright, whose edition of *The Tales* must always be referred to as the standard by which alone the text can be determined with safety; and it is only a just tribute to the merits of that accomplished scholar to add that he is not more distinguished by his valuable and extensive labours than by the liberality with which he communicates his knowledge; a liberality which has placed the editor and the readers of this edition under many obligations.

It is proper to observe that, although the Harl. MS. has been adopted as the basis of the text, it has not been implicitly followed in all cases. As Mr. Wright found it necessary to depart occasionally from his original, so, in some instances, the reading of Mr. Tyrwhitt, when it bore internal evidence of authenticity, has been preferred in this edition. A few cases also occur in which the reading of the MS. has been restored, when it was thought that Mr. Wright had rejected it without sufficient reason; but all deviations, either from

Mr. Wright's edition, or from the original MS., are pointed out in the foot-notes for the ultimate satisfaction of the reader. Fortunately the text of *The Canterbury Tales* is now so correct as to afford little room for such conjectural emendations as still continue to be applied to the text of Shakespeare; and there can be no hesitation in asserting that a reader of ordinary education, particularly if he have any knowledge of French and German, and will take the trouble to read the first ten pages with a glossary by his side, may be able, without difficulty, to understand and enjoy the whole of Chaucer's poems.

In the notes compiled for this edition free use has been made of the labours of former commentators, their authority being invariably acknowledged, either by a reference, or by initials where a quotation is given in full. Thus, passages extracted from the annotations or criticisms of Speght, Tyrwhitt, or Wright, are distinguished by having affixed to them the letters S., T., or W. Sometimes a difference of opinion has arisen, and, whenever it was considered of sufficient importance, the grounds of dissent are stated.

In addition to the tracks of inquiry previously explored, others have been opened up of interest and utility to the general reader. Much attention, for example, has been bestowed upon the elucidation of involved passages by unravelling their construction, and by pointing out the full force of still existing words which Chaucer has used in an obsolete sense, but which do not come within the scope of a glossary. Beliefs, usages, and principles alluded to in the text, which have now either wholly disappeared, or which yet linger in remote places, or survive unnoticed in modern ceremonies and manners, are explained; and in developing their sources numerous illustrations are drawn from our old metrical romances, ballads, chronicles, and local histories. But, perhaps, the most striking and neglected feature of Chaucer's great poem is to be found in its frequent allusions to the practical theology and ecclesiastical customs of the mediæval Church of England. This part of the subject has

been hitherto entirely passed over, or, at best, only superficially noticed. The deficiency is to some extent supplied by the observations on ecclesiastical affairs introduced into the notes, supported in all instances by direct recurrence to the formularies and books of established authority. The customs of the mediæval Church have been traced, wherever it was possible, to their origin in Scripture, or to the traditions of the early church, and occasionally compared, for the sake of illustration, with the practices of our own day. The numerous references to Scripture have also been verified. Such side-lights as these thrown in upon the text are needless to the scholar; but they will be of some value to the reader who now takes up the book for the first time, by enabling him the more easily to understand the poet's meaning, and to realize the state of society he describes.

The paramount aim throughout has been to render this edition popular in a legitimate sense. Nor have any of the projects, or experiments, which have been suggested from time to time to facilitate the convenience of the general reader, been overlooked. Amongst these, the modernization of Chaucer's orthography—so frequently insisted upon as the only means of bringing him within the comprehension of the great bulk of the reading classes—has received due consideration. The earliest attempt of this nature was made by Dryden, whose example was followed, in a similar spirit, by Pope. How far their versions of Chaucer can be said to exhibit a just reflection of the original it is unnecessary to inquire. They are, in fact, very elaborate paraphrases, in which the idiomatic forms and colours of the old writer vanish in the process of adaptation; and they bear no closer resemblance, in spirit or expression, to Chaucer than Pope's translation bears to Homer. The *Fables* of Dryden are as well known to the mass of the public as any poems in the language; but it may be doubted whether they have increased the desire for a more intimate acquaintance with Chaucer, or contributed to the extension of his fame. On the contrary, they have helped rather to obstruct his popularity, by encou-

raging the notion that he must be interpolated, expanded, and purified to suit the modern taste, and that if he is to be read at all, it must be through the medium of an interpreter.

A still more ambitious effort to modernize Chaucer was made in 1740, when the whole of *The Canterbury Tales* were, to use the phraseology of the authors, 'turned into modern language,' and printed on opposite pages to the original. This was at least submitting the venture to an honest ordeal, by furnishing the reader with the means of judging for himself between the poet and his expositors. The decision of the reader may be inferred from the oblivion into which the labours of these gentlemen have fallen. Their failure, however, should not be exclusively ascribed to the hopelessness of the task; but rather to their deficiency in the requisites indispensable to the adequate discharge of the function they assumed. They do not appear to have thoroughly understood their author; they not only suffered a multitude of his characteristic touches to escape, but in a still greater number of instances substituted traits of their own; they embroidered his antiquity with modern tinsel; they sometimes even exchanged his costume for the last new fashion; and throwing into utter confusion the chronology of manners, they transposed the knights and city madams of the fourteenth century into the fine gentlemen and ostentatious ladies of their own time. It does not necessarily follow that all attempts to modernize Chaucer should be disfigured by similar deviations; or that it is impracticable to present a transcript of him that should be more faithful in its details; but the temptations to wander from the text are so irresistible, and the difficulties in the way of achieving a literal version are so insuperable, that we must not be surprised to find that writers whose qualifications justified the highest hopes of success should also have failed in the attempt. The last experiment of this kind was made a few years ago, when a small volume appeared containing a selection from Chaucer's poems, converted into modern English by Wordsworth, Leigh Hunt, and others. The contributors to this volume do not seem to

have proceeded upon any uniform or settled principle, but to have acted independently, each pursuing the plan suggested by his own judgment; the whole, however, being governed by a general intention to keep as close as possible to the text. If there was here too wide a discretion left open to individual taste, the variety it produced was not without a corresponding advantage. It served to show the different latitudes which competent scholars, and acknowledged masters of the art of versification, considered themselves justified in indulging, and to what extent they thought they might depart even from the language of the original in the laudable desire of making its substance more widely known. The result was satisfactory in this respect, that it may be said to have finally determined all doubts on the subject. Some of these versions are distinguished by as much fidelity as it is, perhaps, possible to attain in the transfusion of an ancient author into modern language; and are otherwise admirable specimens of skilful treatment. But they are, nevertheless, as unlike Chaucer as they are unlike each other. In proportion as they preserve strictly his exact phraseology, they become formal and cumbrous; for that which is perfectly easy and natural in its antique garb and associations, acquires an obsolete and heavy air when it is transplanted amongst more familiar forms. When they deviate, on the other hand, which the necessities of structure and metre frequently render unavoidable, it is always at a loss of some subtle trait of expression, or some complexional peculiarity essential to the truthful presentation of the original. Between the new and the old styles which, notwithstanding the utmost care, thus become insensibly mingled, the spirit of Chaucer escapes, and nothing remains, so to speak, but the letter of his work. We are further warned in the best of these versions of another danger inseparable from all such experiments. The special manner of the modern versifier may be traced visibly in each. It would be unreasonable to expect that a translator who is himself a poet should not sometimes relapse, either unconsciously or by design, into his own habits of thought and modes of expres-

sion; and, accordingly, the reader who should take up these poems ignorant of the source from whence they were derived, would have no difficulty in detecting the marks by which the hand of each translator may be identified and distinguished from the rest. We cannot have more conclusive examples of the inutility of attempting to exhibit Chaucer in a modern costume; and, whatever other means may be devised for the removal of difficulties, the hope of rendering him successfully into the language of our day must be abandoned.

Since the publication of these pieces no further efforts have been made in this way. In 1846, Leigh Hunt published some selections from the poems of Chaucer, with a running prose version to assist the reader.[1] The design was ingenious, and less obnoxious to a certain class of objections than the metrical form. It may be doubted, however, whether the most accurate execution of such a design would materially advance the reader in his knowledge of Chaucer. He would find old forms of expression accommodated to modern forms, and if he wished to comprehend his author, he would be compelled to weigh their separate value and contrast their force. He would find some phrases not represented at all; others partially resolved; and not a few inevitably paraphrased. The massive features of the original would be gradually frittered away by the process of examination and comparison in detail he would be compelled to pursue; while the facility afforded to him of summarizing the general meaning would produce an indifference to the study of those minute features in which so much of its peculiar interest consists. In a book of selections, especially with the fine sympathies and critical faculty of Leigh Hunt presiding over its pages, a prose version running at the foot of the text may do something towards the extension of a taste for Chaucer: but it would manifestly be out of place in an edition of Chaucer's works, where everything that could be done by such a version can be much more effectively done by explanatory notes.

[1] *Wit and Humour; selected from the English Poets.* 1846.

The conclusion to which we are led by this review of the means that have been hitherto taken to popularize Chaucer, is that, since he cannot be appreciated in the language of others, he must be read in his own.

But, trusting still to the language of Chaucer, it has frequently been urged that there remains an expedient by which it could be rendered more intelligible to the general reader, without derogating from its integrity. This expedient is to modernize the orthography—apparently a simple proceeding. In the preparation of the present edition this suggestion has been maturely considered, and deliberately rejected for the following reasons. In the first place, it was found that the reduplication of consonants, the employment of the final *e*, and other peculiarities which appear to be mere fancies of the scribe, or obsolete usages of the printer, are in fact grammatical inflections of great beauty and importance. In the second place, these peculiarities, besides being indispensable to grammatical accuracy, constitute the key to the metrical structure of the verse, and must be retained in innumerable instances for the preservation of the metre. To attempt a selection of those which it is indispensable to retain, and others which might be rejected without injury to the metre, would be attended with serious hazard; nor could such an experiment, with our present knowledge of mediæval English, be conducted upon any fixed or rational principles. It would throw open an inexhaustible source of discussion, and render the piebald text utterly valueless to the scholar, without bringing it a step nearer to the comprehension of the general reader, who would, probably, be more perplexed by its inconsistencies than by the comparatively uniform antiquity of the original. The labour of such an undertaking would involve the absolute necessity of investigating, and in a multitude of cases, of reconstructing the grammar and metre of every line separately; and in the end, presuming this labour to be satisfactorily accomplished, the text would not be Chaucer, but a version of Chaucer. The advocates of a modernized orthography have

not sufficiently weighed these objections, and have, probably, founded their opinion of its practicability upon the examples of modernization which have been effected amongst the poets of the Tudor and Stuart periods. But it should be remembered, that those poets do not come within the same category as a poet of the fourteenth century. In their time the old grammatical inflections had been superseded by the modern construction, and the peculiarities of their spelling in no way affected the metre, and did not require to be retained for any other reason.

A critic, whose judgment on such questions may be appealed to with confidence, was of opinion that Chaucer's language and metre could be made easy to the million without tampering with its forms. 'I cannot in the least allow,' he said, 'any necessity for Chaucer's poetry, especially *The Canterbury Tales*, being considered obsolete. Let a plain rule be given for sounding the final *e* of syllables, and for expressing the terminations of such words as *oceän*, *natiön*, &c., as dissyllables; or let the syllables to be sounded in such cases be marked by a competent metrist. This simple expedient would, with a very few trifling exceptions where the errors are inveterate, enable any reader to feel the perfect smoothness and harmony of Chaucer's verse.'[1] The first of these suggestions fully recognizes the propriety of giving Chaucer in his own language. The second proposes a means for facilitating the reader's enjoyment of his metre. This latter proposal, which exhausts all the schemes that have been thought of for popularizing our great poet, is open to some obvious objections.

It may be conceded at once that the accentuation of the text would be useful to the reader, if the terribly complicated appearance it would impart to the verse did not deter him altogether from its perusal—which such a mass of syllabic guides would be very likely to do. In order to carry out a thoroughly effective system of accents, it would be necessary

[1] COLERIDGE.—*Table Talk*.

to employ two or three distinctive signs; and the unavoidable frequency of their recurrence, and the obligation thus created of scanning the lines, would so sensibly interrupt the pleasure of the reader, that, it may be taken for granted, a book scarred over by such scholastic marks would never find its way into general circulation. But there are other objections of a more important kind. For the purpose of testing the experiment practically, the whole of *The Canterbury Tales* were accented in the first instance for this edition; and it was not till the labour had been completed that the design of printing them in that manner was relinquished. The necessity these accents imposed, in a vast number of instances, of deciding doubtful questions affecting the resolution of quantities, and the differences of opinion they would inevitably generate on points for which no arbitrary laws can possibly be laid down, determined their final rejection. It was thought better to supply the reader with a few plain rules for pronunciation, which should embrace the principal structural peculiarities, leaving him to apply them for himself.

The following specimens may be taken as a sample of the results that might be expected from the adoption of a modernized orthography, with accented syllables. It should be observed, that the signs here used are those employed to mark the prosodial value of syllables in Latin and Greek, and that they are introduced merely to express the *analogous* and not the *identical* value in English verse. Accents of a different kind would be necessary for an edition of Chaucer.

ORIGINAL.

Why schuld I nought as wel telle you alle
The portraiture, that was upon the walle
Within the temple of mighty Mars the reede?
Al peynted was the wal in length and breede
Like to the estres of that grisly place,
That hight the gret tempul of Mars in Thrace,
In that colde and frosty regioun
Ther as Mars hath his sovereyn mancioun.
Ferst on the wal was peynted a foreste
In which ther dwelled neyther man nor beste,

With knotty, knarry bareyn trees olde
Of stubbes scharpe and hidous to byholde;
In which ther ran a swymbul in a swough,
As it were a storme schuld berst[1] every bough:
And downward on an hil under a bent,
Ther stood the tempul of Mars armypotent.

ORTHOGRAPHY MODERNIZED.

Why shŏuld I nŏt ăs wĕll tĕllĕ yŏu ăll
Thĕ pŏrtrăitŭre thăt wās ŭpŏn thĕ wăll,
Within thĕ tĕmple ŏf mĭghtў Mārs thĕ rēede?[2]
All păintĕd wās thĕ wăll ĭn lĕngth ānd brēede?
Lĭke tō thĕ ēstrēs ŏf thăt grĭslў plăce,
Thăt hight thĕ grēat tĕmplē ŏf Mārs ĭn Thrăce,
In thăt cŏldē ānd frōstў rēgĭon,
Thĕre ās Mārs hăth his sōv'rēign mānsĭon.
First, ōn thĕ wăll wăs păintĕd ă fŏrēste,
In whĭch thĕre dwĕllĕd nēithĕr mān nŏr bēast,
With knŏttў, knărrў, bărrĕn trēēs ōld,
With stŭbbĕs shārp ānd hĭdeŏus tō bĕhōld;
In whĭch thĕre rān ă swĭmblĕ ĭn ă swōugh
As 'twēre ă stōrm shŏuld bŭrstĕ ēverў bōugh;
And dŏwnwărd ōn ăn hĭll ŭndēr ă bēnt,
Thĕre stōod thĕ tēmpl' ŏf Mārs ărmĭpŏtēnt.

ORIGINAL.

O litel child, allas! what is thi gilt,
That never wroughtest synne as yet, pardé?
Why wil thyn harde fader han the spilt?
'O mercy, deere constable,' seyde sche,
'And let my litel child here dwelle with the;

[1] There should, perhaps, be a final *e* to *berst*; it was probably elided by the scribe, as remarked by Mr. Wright, in his introduction, before every. The line would then be read—

'As 'twere a storm should bursten every bough;'

which is much better. But this is one example of the difficulty of preserving Chaucer's own language, and modernizing the orthography.

[2] This ought to have been changed into *red*, but then *breede* must have been changed into *bred*, which would not have expressed the meaning. This is another example of a difficulty which, by this time, the reader will perceive is insurmountable.

And if thou darst not saven him for blame,
So kys him oones in his fadres name.

Therwith sche loketh bak-ward to the lond,
And seyde, 'Farwel housbond rewtheles!'
And up sche rist, and walketh doun the stronde
Toward the schip, hir folweth al the prees;
And ever sche preyeth hir child to hold his pees,
And took hir leve, and with an holy entent
Sche blesseth hire and to the schip sche went.

ORTHOGRAPHY MODERNIZED.

'O lĭttlĕ chīld, ălās! whăt īs thў gūilt,
Thăt nēvĕr wrōughtĕst sīn ăs yĕt, părdī?
Whў will thў hārdĕ făthĕr hāve thĕe spīlt?
Ŏ mĕrcў, dĕarĕ Cōnstăblĕ,' săid shē,
'And lēt mў lĭttlĕ chīld hĕre dwēll wĭth thĕe;
And īf thŏu dăr'st nŏt sāvĕn hĭm fŏr blāme,
Sŏ kĭss hĭm ōnĕs ĭn hĭs făthĕr's nāme.'

Thĕrewĭth shĕ lōokĕth bāckwărd tō thĕ lānd,
And sāidĕ, 'Fārewĕll hūsbănd rūthĕlēss!'
And ūp shĕ rōse, ănd wālkĕth dōwn thĕ strānd
Tŏwārd thĕ shĭp; hĕr fōllowĕth āll thĕ prēss;
And ĕvĕr[1] shĕ prāy'th hĕr chīld tŏ hōld hĭs pēace,
And tōok hĕr lēave, ănd wĭth ăn holy[2] ĭntēnt
Shĕ blēs-ĕth hēr ănd tō thĕ shĭp shĕ wēnt.

The reader, after he has compared the original and the modernized version, will probably think that the former is quite as intelligible as the latter; and, even if he finds it a little more troublesome at first, will ultimately prefer it, for the sake of its being the real language of Chaucer.

The Canterbury Tales have always occupied the first place in the order of Chaucer's poems; and that arrangement, which there is no sufficient reason for disturbing, has been followed in this edition. There can be little doubt, however, from allusions they contain to events that occurred in 1386, and to the *Confessio Amantis*, written in 1392-3,

[1] Three short syllables equivalent to a short and a long, or an iambus.
[2] The *y* must be elided.

that in some of these tales we have the last productions of his genius. Mr. Wright conjectures, from the unfinished state of the work, and the variations of the different MSS., that they were not composed continuously, but in detached portions, to be afterwards joined together. The original plan, as indicated by the Prologue, was evidently intended to include the proceedings of the pilgrims at Canterbury and their journey back to London, during which each of them was to relate a second story, the whole winding up with a supper and an Epilogue. Of this considerable design scarcely the first half was accomplished; and even that division was left incomplete, connecting links being wanted in several places. Chaucer appears to have carried out his purpose consecutively only so far as the opening of *The Cook's Tale*, up to which all the MSS. correspond in the order of the tales. From that point their divergence is not more remarkable than their final agreement, the tales of *The Maniple* and *The Parson* in all instances terminating the series.

POEMS

OF

GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

The Canterbury Tales.

THE PROLOGUE.

WHAN that Aprille with his schowres swoote[1]
The drought of Marche hath perced to the roote,

[1] A metrical analysis of the first few lines of the Prologue, in which examples of most of the peculiarities of inflexion and accentuation alluded to in the introduction occur, will, it is hoped, enable the reader to conquer any difficulties of this nature that may present themselves in the verse. The principles here indicated will be found applicable throughout the poem. This is Tyrwhitt's plan; but it will be seen that, as the text is different from his, so also is the metre. The marks of *long* and *short*, properly applied to the classical metres only, are here used as being plainer than an accent on the accented syllables:—

'Whăn thăt | Aprĭl | lĕ with | hĭs schōw | rĕs swōote
Thĕ drōught | ŏf Märche | hăth pĕr | cĕd tō | thĕ rōote,
Ănd bā | thŭd ēve | rў vēyne | ĭn swĭch | lĭcōur,
Ŏf whĭch | vĕrtūe | ĕngēn | drĕd ĭs | thĕ flōur;
Whăn Zĕ | phўrūs | ĕek with | hĭs swē | tĕ brēeth
Ĕnspī | rŭd hăth | ĭn ēve | rў hōlte | ănd hēeth
Thĕ tēn | drĕ crōp | pĕs, ānd | thĕ yōn | gĕ sōnne
Hăth ĭn | thĕ Răm | hĭs hăl | fĕ cōurs | ĭ-rōnne,
Ănd smā | lĕ fōw | lĕs mā | kĕn mē | lŏdīe,
Thăt slē | pĕn āl | thĕ nĭght | with ō | pĕn ўhe,
Sŏ prĭk | ĕth hēm | năturē | ĭn hēre | cŏrāges:—
Thănne lōn | gĕń fōlk | tŏ gōn | ŏn pĭl | grĭmāges, &c.'

Here the final *e* in *Aprille*, *swete*, *halfe*, *yonge*, *smale* is pronounced; but

And bathud every veyne in swich licour,
Of which vertue[1] engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth
Enspirud hath in every holte and heeth
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne[2]
Hath in the Ram[3] his halfe cours i-ronne,
And smale fowles maken melodie,
That slepen al the night with open yhe,
So priketh[4] hem nature in here corages:—
Thanne longen folk to gon on pilgrimages,

---

it is quiescent in *Marche, veyne, nature*, because in these cases it is followed by a word beginning with a vowel, or with the letter *h*. This is the rule of French poetry. The final *es* is pronounced in *croppes, fowles*, as in German. The French words *licour, nature, corages* are accented on the last syllable of the root, as in French. The reader will also remark the old forms of *hem* and *here*, for them and their; and *slepen, maken*, the Anglo-Saxon inflexion of the infinitive and plural verb: *i-ronne* is also the pret. part. of *rennen*, to run, as in German, *gelobt*, from *loben*.

[1] *Vertue* here signifies power. The meaning is, when April has bathed every vein of the earth in that moisture which, by its genial power, produces the blossom.

> 'Where now the vital energy that moved,
> While summer was, the pure and subtle lymph
> Through the imperceptible meandering veins
> Of leaf and flower? It sleeps; and the icy touch
> Of unprolific winter has impressed
> A cold stagnation on the intestine tide.'
>
> COWPER.—*Task. Winter Walk at Noon.*

[2] The sun is said to be young, as having only just entered upon his annual progress through the signs of the Zodiac.

[3] For *Ram*, Tyrwhitt proposes to read *Bull*, because in April the sun has entered the sign of Taurus. The study of astronomy was introduced into Europe in the middle ages by the Arabs; hence almost all the technical terms of astronomy to this day are pure Arabic. Its popularity probably arose from its connexion with judicial astrology, also derived from the East, which brought the heavenly phenomena to bear influentially upon the practical business of life. Numerous allusions to astrology will be found in Chaucer's poems.

[4] So nature spurs or excites them in their passions. Courage means generally impulse, desire, as 'devout courage' further on, impulse of devotion.

And palmers[1] for to seeken straunge strondes,
To ferne[2] halwes, kouthe in sondry londes;
And specially, from every schires ende
Of Engelond, to Canturbury they wende,
The holy blisful martir[3] for to seeke,
That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.[4]

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[1] Speght makes the distinction between palmers and pilgrims to consist in the former never ceasing to go from shrine to shrine, while the latter are under a vow only to perform one specified pilgrimage. In this fanciful interpretation he is followed by Sir Walter Scott. It is obvious that *palmer* means one who has made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and brought home a palm-branch as a token, just as the pilgrims to Saint James of Compostella used to bring home a cockle-shell. Thus Chaucer makes the palmers long to seek *strange*, *i. e.*, foreign strands.

[2] Speght and Tyrwhitt for *ferne*, read *serve*. The reading in the text has been restored by Mr. Wright from the Harl. MS., and means *distant*, from *fer* far. Halwes, meaning saints, is still retained in the Scottish Hallowe'en, the Eve of All Hallows, or All Saints. In the Lord's Prayer, 'Hallowed be thy name!' is the translation of *sanctificetur* nomen tuum. *Kouthe*, known, from *kennen*, to know, survives in our uncouth, unknown, strange.

[3] Thomas à Becket, the Chancellor of Henry II. The King raised him to the see of Canterbury in the hope that he would become a willing instrument in establishing the Norman dynasty and oppressing the Saxons; but finding, on the contrary, that he strenuously defended the rights of the church and of the conquered and oppressed people, he employed three of his retainers to murder him while he was saying mass in his cathedral. Becket was soon afterwards canonized, and his remains, which were preserved at Canterbury, became an object of pilgrimage. Mr. Macaulay says, 'It was a national as well as a religious feeling that drew great multitudes to the shrine of Becket, the first Englishman who, since the Conquest, had been terrible to the foreign tyrants.'—*Hist. Eng.*, vol. i.

[4] Who had helped them by his prayers, and been thus instrumental to their recovery. In the middle ages it was usual, in sickness or peril, to vow a pilgrimage to the shrine of a saint, and if the person was restored to health or escaped the danger, the happy issue was ascribed to the prayers of the saint, whose shrine was heaped with rich offerings in acknowledgment. Erasmus, in his *Peregrinatio religionis ergo*, alludes to numbers of arms and legs hung up in the shrine of Saint Thomas in gratitude for the cures effected in these particular limbs by his prayers. Similar memorials may still be seen in churches on the continent. Saint Louis vowed his first crusade or pilgrimage to Jerusalem when he was so ill as to be thought past recovery; and on his return, when he and the Queen were in danger

Byfel that, in that sesoun on a day,
In Southwerk at the Tabbard[1] as I lay,
Redy to wenden on my pilgrimage
To Canturbury with ful devout corage,
At night was come into that hostelrie
Wel nyne and twenty in a companye,
Of sondry folk, by aventure i-falle
In felawschipe, and pilgryms were thei alle,
That toward Canturbury wolden ryde.
The chambres and the stables weren wyde,
And wel we weren esud[2] atte beste.
And schortly, whan the sonne was[3] to reste,
So hadde I spoken with hem everychon,
That I was of here felawschipe anon,
And made forward[4] erly to aryse,
To take oure weye ther as I yow devyse.[5]
But natheles, whiles I have tyme and space,
Or that I ferthere in this tale pace,
Me thinketh it acordant to resoun,
To telle yow alle the condicioun

---

of shipwreck, Lord de Joinville tells us that she came into his cabin in great distress, and that he said to her, 'Madame, vow to make a pilgrimage to my Lord Saint Nicholas, at Varengeville, and I promise you that God will restore us in safety to France.'—*Memoirs of Saint Louis.* Part II.

[1] A sleeveless coat worn in times past by noblemen in the wars, but now only by heralds, and is called their 'coat of arms in service.' It is the sign of an inn in Southwark by London, within the which was the lodging of the Abbot of Hyde by Winchester.—S.

The Tabard is now the Talbot Inn in the High-street, Borough. The sign was changed in 1676. An inscription was afterwards set up to indicate the house: 'This is the inne where Sir Jeffry Chaucer and the nine and twenty pilgrims lay in their journey to Canterbury, anno 1383.' No part of the existing inn is of the age of Chaucer. In Speght's time it was 'newly repaired, with convenient rooms much increased, for the receipt of many guests. The oldest parts of the present structure do not date earlier than the age of Elizabeth.

[2] Accommodated in the best manner. 'Easement' is still used in law-conveyances with the meaning of accommodation.

[3] To rest, *i. e.*, *at* rest, in a state of rest; a pure Anglo-Saxon form.

[4] Made agreement beforehand.

[5] To that place that I tell you of, *scil.*, Canterbury.

Of eche of hem, so as it semed me,
And which they weren, and of what degre;
And eek in what array that they were inne:
And at a knight than wol I first bygynne.
A KNIGHT[1] ther was, and that a worthy man,
That from the tyme that he first bigan
To ryden out, he lovede chyvalrye,
Trouthe and honour, fredom and curtesie.
Ful worthi was he in his lordes werre,
And thereto hadde he riden, noman ferre,[2]
As wel in Cristendom as in hethenesse,
And evere honoured for his worthinesse.
At Alisandre[3] he was whan it was wonne,
Ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bygonne[4]

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[1] In the middle ages, before the system of standing armies was introduced, the military force of the kingdom consisted of the barons, who, according to the feudal tenure, were obliged to supply, for their sovereign's wars, a certain number of knights, who were again obliged to bring into the field a contingent of inferior men-at-arms and yeomen, in proportion to the amount of their landed property. After the campaign was over, this militia returned to their former occupation; and a soldier by profession was obliged to seek employment and a livelihood, by serving under different captains in all parts of the world. The knight is here said to have ridden 'in his lorde's werre,' that is, to have served under his feudal superior, abroad and at home. It might at first seem as if *his lorde's werre* meant the crusade; but he is said to have served, not only in heathenesse, but in Christendom. Tyrwhitt supposes that the achievements of Chaucer's knight were suggested by those of a contemporary, 'le noble et vaillant Chevaler, Mathew de Gourney,' whose epitaph is given in Leland's *Itin.* v. iii. p. 91, 'qui en sa vie fu en la bataille de Benamaryn, et alla apres à la siége d'Algezir sur les Sarazines, et aussi à la bataille de l'Escluse, de Cressy, de Deyngenesse, de Peyteres, de Nazare, d'Ozrey, et à plusieurs autres batailles et asseges, en les quex il gagna noblement grant los et honour.'

[2] *Ferre* is the comparative of *fer*, far—superlative, *ferrest*.

[3] Alexandria, in Egypt, was won, and immediately afterwards abandoned, in 1365, by Pierre de Lusignan, King of Cyprus.—T.

[4] This knight, being often among the knights of the Dutch order, called Ordo Teutonicus, in Prussia, was, for his worthiness, placed by them at the table before any of what nation soever.—S. In other senses, bord or bourd means play, often used for fight or battle. Thus 2 Sam., ii. 14, Abner says, 'Let the young men arise and *play* before us,' meaning fight; at Hampton-court, the 'toy' means the tilting-ground, and sword-play is a common expression. The meaning of the passage no doubt is, that this knight occupied the highest place at the table, and when

Aboven alle nacioun̄s in Pruce.
In Lettowe[1] hadde reyced and in Ruce,
No cristen man so ofte of his degre.
In Gernade atte siege hadde he be
Of Algesir,[2] and riden in Belmarie.[3]
At Lieys was he, and at Satalie,[4]
Whan they were wonne; and in the Greete[5] see
At many a noble arive[6] hadde he be.
At mortal batailles hadde he ben fitene,
And foughten for our feith at Tramassene
In lystes thries, and ay slayn his foo.
This ilke worthi knight hadde ben also
Somtyme with the lord of Palatye,[7]
Ageyn another hethene in Turkye:

---

the cup went round, which was done ceremoniously, he was served first, and, therefore, *began* before all other nations, that is, natives of the several states of Germany, who composed the Teutonic order, or who were fighting against the infidels in Prussia. The Teutonic order, like the Templars and Knights of St. John, was originally founded to fight against the Saracens in Palestine; but 'finding,' as Fuller remarks, 'that by the course of the cards they must rise losers if they continued the war in the holy land, Hermannus de Saltza, then fourth Grand Master, came, in 1239, into Prussia, converted the half-heathen people of that country, and defended that frontier of Christendom against the heathen Tartars. Albert of Brandenburg was the last Grand Master. He broke the vow of his order, losing his virginitie to keep his chastity, and married Dorothea, daughter of the Duke of Denmark.'—FULLER'S *Holy War*, book v. c. 14. In him originated the royal house of Brandenburg, of which the present King of Prussia is the head.

[1] Lithuania and Russia were not thoroughly converted to Christianity till the 13th century, and were continually at war with the frontier countries of Christendom.

[2] The city of Algezir was taken from the Moorish King of Granada in 1344.

[3] Belmarie and Tremessen were Moorish kingdoms in Africa.

[4] Pierre de Lusignan, soon after his accession to the throne of Cyprus in 1352, took Satalie, the ancient Attalia; and in another expedition about 1367, he made himself master of the town of Layas, in Armenia.—T.

[5] Probably the part of the Mediterranean which washes the shores of Palestine, in opposition to the small inland Sea or Lake of Gennesaret and the Dead Sea.

[6] Speght and Tyrwhitt read *armie*. *Arive* must here mean arrival, or disembarkation of troops.

[7] Palathia in Anatolia.

And everemore he hadde a sovereyn prys.
And though that he was worthy he was wys,[1]
And of his port as meke as is a mayde.
He never yit no vilonye[2] ne sayde
In al his lyf, unto no maner wight.
He was a verray perfight gentil knight.
But for to telle you of his aray,
His hors was good, but he ne was nought gay.
Of fustyan he wered a gepoun
Al bysmoterud with his haburgeoun.[3]
For he was late comen from his viage,
And wente for to doon his pilgrimage.[4]
With him ther was his sone, a yong SQUYER,
A lovyer, and a lusty bacheler,
With lokkes crulle as they were layde in presse.
Of twenty yeer he was of age I gesse.
Of his stature he was of evene lengthe,
And wondurly delyver, and gret of strengthe.

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[1] Though he was so worthy or brave in the field, he was not the less sage in council.

[2] A remarkable illustration of the knight's carefulness to avoid all unbecoming words is to be found in Joinville's *Memoirs of Louis IX., King of France, commonly called St. Louis*, the model of the knightly character, a work which should be consulted by every person who desires to understand the spirit of chivalry. 'I have been constantly with him,' says the seneschal, 'for twenty-two years, but never in my life, for all the passions I have seen him in, did I hear him swear, or blaspheme God, his holy mother, or any of the saints. When he wished to affirm anything, he said, 'Truly it is so.' . . . I never heard him mention the word 'devil,' if it was not in some book that made it necessary; and it is very disgraceful to the princes and kingdom of France to suffer it, and hear the name; for you will see that in any dispute one will not say three words to another in abuse, but he will add, 'Go to the devil,' or other bad words. Now it is very shocking thus to send man or woman to the devil, when they are by baptism become the children of God. In my castle of Joinville, whoever makes use of this word is instantly buffeted, and the frequency of bad language is abolished there.'

[3] The habergeon or hauberk was the peculiar armour of knights, hence called loricati.

[4] He had but just accomplished his voyage home, and immediately hastened to perform the pilgrimage he had vowed for a safe return, without waiting to change the clothes he had worn all through the campaign.

And he hadde ben somtyme in chivachie,[1]
In Flaundres, in Artoys, and in Picardie,
And born him wel, as in so litel space,
In hope to stonden in his lady grace.
Embrowdid[2] was he, as it were a mede
Al ful of fresshe floures, white and reede.
Syngynge he was, or flowtynge, al the day;
He was as fressh as is the moneth of May.
Schort was his goune, with sleeves long and wyde.
Wel cowde he sitte on hors, and faire ryde.
He cowde songes wel make and endite,
Justne and eek daunce, and wel purtray and write.
So hote he lovede, that by nightertale
He sleep nomore than doth a nightyngale.
Curteys he was, lowly, and servysable,
And carf byforn his fadur at the table.[3]
A YEMAN[4] had he, and servantes nomoo
At that tyme, for him lust ryde soo;
And he was clad in coote and hood of grene.
A shef of pocok arwes[5] bright and kene

---

[1] The squire had been permitted to ride in attendance upon a knight, in short military expeditions, preparatory to being himself admitted to the order of knighthood.

[2] Literally *embroidered*, from the French, *broder*; Speght understands it to mean freckled; but it seems rather to signify a complexion of mingled white and red.

[3] The descriptions of the knight and squire are interesting examples of the *beau ideal* of the chivalrous character; its purity of morals and reverence for women; its love of manly exercises, and, at the same time, of liberal accomplishments, and its cultivation of that spirit of self-respect combined with humility, which feels no degradation in giving honour to whom honour is due.

[4] Tyrwhitt notices the mistake of the printed copies in calling this character 'the squire's yeoman;' whereas the pronoun *he* must refer to the knight. Yeoman is the Saxon *gama*, a man, which was retained, a little altered in form, to distinguish this particular class. The title was given in a secondary sense to persons in a middling rank of life not in service. So the miller, in the *Reeve's Tale*, is careful 'to saven his estaat and yomanrye.' The knight probably rode on his pilgrimage with only one attendant, from humility. In *Gamelyn*, the word *yeongeman* is used for yeoman.

[5] Arrows were usually feathered from the wing of the swan, as in the ballad of *Chevy Chase*—

Under his belte he bar full thriftily.
Wel cowde he dresse his takel yomanly;
His arwes drowpud nought with fetheres lowe.
And in his hond he bar a mighty bowe.
A not-heed[1] hadde he with a broun visage.
Of woode-craft cowde he wel al the usage.
Upon his arme he bar a gay bracer,
And by his side a swerd and a bokeler,
And on that other side a gay daggere,
Harneysed wel, and scharp as poynt of spere;
A Cristofre[2] on his brest of silver schene.
An horn he bar, the bawdrik was of grene;
A forster was he sothely, as I gesse.
Ther was also a Nonne, a PRIORESSE,
That of hire smylyng was ful symple and coy;
Hire grettest ooth nas but by seynt Loy;[3]
And sche was clept madame Englentyne.
Ful wel sche sang the servise devyne,

'The dynt yt was bath sad and soar,
That he of Mongonberry sete;
The swane-fethars, that his arrowe bar,
With his hart blood the wear wete.'

Peacock's feathers were sometimes used on occasions of show for their greater beauty. Thus in the *Lytell Geste of Robyn Hode*, published in Ritson's collection, Sir Richard at the Lee sends the outlaw a present of a hundred sheaves of arrows:—

'And every arrow an elle longe,
With pecocke well ydight.'—*Fytte* ii. 202.

It was a sign of the yeoman's carefulness in his business that they stuck out from the shaft instead of drooping.

[1] Tyrwhitt and Mr. Wright understand by this expression 'a head like a nut;' but there is a Saxon verb 'to notte,' meaning to poll or clip, as is noticed by Dr. Maitland in his *Essays on the Reformation*. The expression 'nut-headed knave' occurs in Shakespeare's *Henry VIII.* The hair was worn long in the time of Edward III., see Chaucer's *Wordes to Adam, his owne scrivener*; but such a fashion would be inconvenient to one engaged in wood-craft.

[2] This saint is represented as an old man of great stature, carrying Christ, in the form of a little child, upon his back over a river. His legend, in the *Legenda Aurea*, if taken as an allegory, is not without merit, and accounts for the reverence shown him by the lower orders.

[3] Tyrwhitt and Mr. Wright suppose this to be a contraction of Eloy, or Eligius; but in the French translation of the *Legenda Aurea*,

Entuned in hire nose[1] ful semyly;
And Frensch sche spak ful faire and fetysly,
Aftur the scole of Stratford atte Bowe,[2]
For Frensch of Parys was to hire unknowe.
At mete wel i-taught was sche withalle;
Sche leet no morsel from hire lippes falle,
Ne wette hire fyngres in hire sauce deepe.
Wel cowde sche carie a morsel, and wel keepe,
That no drope fil uppon hire brest.
In curtesie was sett al hire lest.
Hire overlippe wypud sche so clene,
That in hire cuppe was no ferthing sene
Of grees, whan sche dronken hadde hire draught.
Ful semely aftur hire mete sche raught.
And sikurly sche was of gret disport,
And ful plesant, and amyable of port,
And peyned hire to counterfete cheere
Of court, and ben estatlich of manere,
And to ben holden digne of reverence.
But for to speken of hire conscience,
Sche was so charitable and so pitous,
Sche wolde weepe if that sche sawe a mous

---

by Jehan de Vignay, published in 1543, the name of St. Louis is thus spelt. In the *Book of Homilies*, published in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the name again occurs in the same form. 'God and St. Loy save thee.' It is quite in character, for the prioress, so proud of her obsolete French, and who 'peyned hire to counterfete cheere of court,' to swear by 'St. Loy roi de France.'

[1] Speght reads *voice*, which gives a better sense; for to sing the service divine through the nose would be anything but seemly.

[2] It is highly characteristic of the innocent affectation of court manners and real ignorance of the ways of the world which pervade the whole of the simple Prioress's character, that she should speak the French of the 'scole of Stratford atte Bowe,' meaning such French as was used by the common people at Stratford. 'Scole' here has the same force as in its more strict application to a particular style in art —the Venetian school for example. The expression occurs again in the *Miller's Tale*, where Absolon is said to dance after the scole of Oxenford, *i. e.*, the style that was fashionable at Oxford. Equally characteristic is the Prioress's precision in practising such rules of good manners as could be learned from the books of those times. Tyrwhitt quotes a passage from the *Roman de la Rose*, which lays down rules for proper behaviour at table almost in the same words.

Caught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.
Of smale houndes hadde sche, that sche fedde
With rostud fleissh and mylk and wastel breed.
But sore wepte sche if oon of hem were deed,
Or if men smot[1] it with a yerde smerte:
And al was conscience and tendre herte.
Ful semely hire wymple i-pynched was;
Hire nose streight; hire eyen grey as glas;
Hire mouth ful smal, and therto softe and reed;
But sikurly sche hadde a fair forheed.
It was almost a spanne brood, I trowe;
For hardily sche was not undurgrowe.
Ful fetys was hire cloke, as I was waar.
Of smal coral aboute hire arme sche baar
A peire of bedes gaudid al with grene;[2]
And theron heng a broch[3] of gold ful schene,

---

[1] Mr. Wright observes that 'the word *men* appears here construed with a singular verb, as though it had been *man* (on frappa).' The verb, to agree with *men*, ought regularly to be *smote*. But to this place may, perhaps, apply the rule given in his valuable introduction, where he says, 'It was a constant rule to elide the final *e* in pronunciation, when it preceded a word beginning with a vowel or with the letter *h*.' And he adds, 'This was the source of frequent errors to the scribes, who omitted sometimes to write the letter which they did not pronounce.' He notices the same error in a line a little farther on. 'Men might (mighte) his bridel heere.'

[2] *Bede* meant originally a prayer, as in *bedesman*; but from the custom of counting prayers upon a string of grains, it came at last to be applied to the grains themselves. The collection of prayers thus counted, and called *rosaries*, are divided according to their subjects, and the divisions are marked by beads of a different shape or colour; these were called *gawdays*, meaning trifling ornaments, and in this case were enamelled with green. Fleury states that this kind of devotion was first introduced to enable the unlearned lay-brothers, or servants in the monasteries, to count the paternosters which they were bound to recite at the canonical hours, instead of repeating the Psalms and lessons from Scripture in Latin like the learned monks.

[3] Properly a pin, from *broche*, a *spit*, but applied generally to any jewel. The crowned A appears, in accordance with the motto, to denote the sovereign virtue of charity, or Amor. Warton says that this motto and device are inconsistent with the prioress's profession: but love or charity is represented in Scripture as the greatest of Christian graces.

On which was first i-writen a crowned A,
And after that, *Amor vincit omnia.*
Anothur NONNE also with hire hadde sche,
That was hire chapelleyn,[1] and PRESTES thre.
A MONK ther was, a fair for the maistrie,[2]
An out-rydere, that loved venerye;[3]
A manly man, to ben an abbot able.
Full many a deynte hors hadde he in stable:
And whan he rood, men might his bridel[4] heere
Gyngle in a whistlyng wynd so cleere,
And eek as lowde as doth the chapel belle.
Ther as this lord was keper of the selle,[5]

---

[1] Tyrwhitt professes not to be able to conjecture the duties of a female chaplain; they may be inferred, however, from the desire that existed to assimilate the offices in religious houses of women to those in the monasteries of men, and the duties of a chaplain to the prioress may have consisted in attending generally upon her in chapel.

[2] A French phrase, applying to one who bid fair to excel all others. Tyrwhitt quotes some passages from old books on medicine, where a remedy is said to be '*bone pur la maistrie*,' that is, a *sovereign* remedy.

[3] Hunting.—The canon law strictly forbids clergymen to hunt, but it was often infringed in the middle ages; one of the offences most severely lashed by Wickliffe.

[4] The custom of hanging small bells on the bridles and harness of horses is still observed on the continent for the purpose of giving notice to foot passengers to get out of the way; but it was, no doubt, often used for ostentation. So Wickliffe inveighs against the clergy in his *Triologe* for their 'fair hors, and jolly and gay sadeles, and bridles *ringing* by the way.'—LEWIS'S *Wickliffe*, p. 121.

Lydgate, who was a monk of the Benedictine Abbey of St. Edmund's Bury, as a set-off against this description of a luxurious monk, in his imitation of the *Canterbury Tales* thus describes himself:—

On a palfray, slender, long and lene,
With rusty bridle made not for the sale,
My man toforne with a void male.

The host then addresses him:—

dan Pers,
Dan Dominike, dan Godfray, or Clement,
Ye be welcome newly into Kent,
Thogh your bridel have nother boos ne bell.
* * * *
Upon your head a wonder thredbare hood.

[5] In the cell, or religious house, where this lord or monk was superior, a milder discipline was observed. As for the rules of St. Maur and St. Benet, he let them pass by (*forby*, still used in Scotland)

The reule of seynt Maure or of seint Beneyt,[1]
Bycause that it was old and somdel streyt,
This ilke monk leet forby hem pace,
And helde aftur the newe world the space.[2]
He gaf nat of that text a pulled hen,
That seith, that hunters been noon holy men;
Ne that a monk, whan he is cloysterles,
Is likned to a fissche that is watirles;[3]
This is to seyn, a monk out of his cloystre.
But thilke text hild he not worth an oystre.
And I seide his opinioun was good.
What schulde he studie, and make himselven wood,
Uppon a book in cloystre alway to powre,
Or swynke with his handes, and laboure,[4]
As Austyn byt? How schal the world be served?
Lat Austyn have his swynk to him reserved.

---

because they were old and strict, and resolved to hold his course after the fashions of the new world. For *forby hem*, which occurs three line after, Mr. Wright substitutes *olde thinges*, from Tyrwhitt.

[1] The rule of St. Benedict, contracted Benet, was written about A.D. 530, and was the original, by which almost all the monastic orders in the west regulated their observances.

[2] The meaning of the word *space* is not obvious. Tyrwhitt reads *trace*, and Speght *pace*, both implying footsteps. This monk followed in the footsteps of the new world.

[3] Tyrwhitt cites the text attributed by Gratian to a Pope Eugenius, *Sicut piscis sine aqua caret vita, ita sine monasterio monachus.* Thus Joinville says, 'the Scriptures do say that a monk cannot live out of his cloister without falling into deadly sins, any more than a fish can live out of water without dying. The reason is plain; for the religious who follow the king's court, eat and drink many meats and wines which they would not do were they resident in their cloisters; and this luxurious living induces them more to sin than if they lived the austere life of a convent.'

[4] Peter the Venerable thus answers St. Bernard's complaints of the disuse of manual labour by the Benedictine monks. 'The rule [of St. Benedict] ordains it [manual labour] only to avoid idleness, which *we* avoid by spending our time in holy exercises, prayer, reading, psalmody.' 'As if,' adds Fleury, 'St. Benedict had not given enough time to these holy exercises, and had not had good reasons for requiring, *besides*, *seven* whole hours of labour.' St. Augustin followed St. Eusebius of Vercelli, in making his cathedral clergy live according to a rule similar to that of the monks, so far as their duties would permit.

Therfore he was a pricasour aright;
Greyhoundes he hadde as swifte as fowel in flight;
Of prikyng and of huntyng for the hare
Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.
I saugh his sleves purfiled atte hond
With grys,[1] and that the fynest of a lond.
And for to festne his hood undur his chyn
He hadde of gold y-wrought a curious pyn:
A love-knotte[2] in the gretter ende ther was.
His heed was ballid, and schon as eny glas,
And eek his face as he hadde be anoynt.
He was a lord ful fat and in good poynt;[3]
His eyen steep, and rollyng in his heed,
That stemed as a forneys of a leed;
His bootes souple,[4] his hors in gret estat.
Now certeinly he was a fair prelat;
He was not pale as a for-pyned goost.
A fat swan loved he best of eny roost.
His palfray was as broun as eny berye.
A Frere ther was, a wantoun and a merye,
A lymytour,[5] a ful solempne man.
In alle the ordres foure[6] is noon that can

[1] Probably the fur of the grey squirrel, in French *petit gris*. In St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin there is a brass of a canon, with tippet trimmed with fur. A remnant of this custom is seen in the fur hoods of bachelors in our Universities.

[2] See *ante*, p. 83, note 3.

[3] A literal translation of the French *embonpoint*.

[4] This is part of the description of a smart abbot by an anonymous writer of the thirteenth century, 'Ocreas habebat in cruribus, quasi innatæ essent, sine plicâ porrectas.'—Bod. MS., James, N. 6, p. 121. —T.

[5] A lymytour was a friar, to whom had been assigned a certain district or limit, within which he was permitted to solicit alms.

[6] The four orders of mendicant friars were—1. The Dominicans, or friars preachers, who took up their abode in Oxford in 1221, known from the colour of their dress as the Black friars. 2. The Franciscans, founded by St. Francis of Assisi, in 1207, and known by the name of Grey friars. These first established houses in England in 1224. 3. The Carmelites, or White friars, so called from their having first appeared on Mount Carmel. 4. The Augustin friars. On their first establishment, the poverty, the learning, and the industry in preaching of the

So moche of daliaunce and fair langage.
He hadde i-made many a fair mariage
Of yonge wymmen, at his owne cost.
Unto his ordre he was a noble post.[1]
Ful wel biloved and famulier was he
With frankeleyns over al in his cuntre,
And eek with worthi wommen of the toun:
For he hadde power of confessioun,
As seyde himself, more than a curat,
For of his ordre he was licenciat.[2]
Ful sweetly herde he confessioun,
And plesaunt was his absolucioun;
He was an esy man to geve penance
Ther as he wiste to han a good pitance;
For unto a povre ordre for to geve
Is signe that a man is wel i-schreve.

friars, presented a favourable contrast to the luxury of the monks, and they were, therefore, at first popular; but the wealth which had flowed in upon them in the days of their zeal, had, in the time of Chaucer, begun to do its work. The following description of a friar of the thirteenth century may be taken as the other side of Chaucer's picture. 'While we were at Hieres, we heard of a very good man, a Cordelier friar, who went about the country preaching; his name was Father Hugh. The king being desirous of hearing and seeing him, we went out to meet him, and saw a great company of men and women following him on foot. On his arrival in the town, the king directed him to preach, and his first sermon was against the clergy, whom he blamed for being in such numbers with the king, saying they were not in a situation to save their souls, or that the Scriptures lied. He afterwards addressed the king, and pointed out to him that if he wished to live beloved and in peace with his people, he must be just and upright. He said he had carefully perused the Bible and other holy books, and had always found that among princes, whether infidel or Christian, no kingdoms had ever been excited to war against their lords, but through want of proper justice being done to the subject.'—*Memoirs of St. Louis.*

[1] *Post* means pillar or support; an expression probably taken from Gal. ii. 9, where St. Paul calls Peter, and James, and John 'pillars' of the church.

[2] In the penitential system of the mediæval church, there were some cases for which a parish priest could not give absolution, and which were reserved for the bishop's decision. The Popes, however, have been in the habit of granting to some orders the privilege of deciding all cases and absolving from all sins, without any reference to the bishops. This was of course a fruitful source of jealousy.

For if he gaf, he dorste make avaunt,
He wiste that a man was repentaunt.
For many a man so hard is of his herte,
He may not wepe though him sore smerte.
Therfore in stede of wepyng and prayeres,
Men mooten given silver to the pore freres.
His typet[1] was ay farsud ful of knyfes
And pynnes, for to give faire wyfes.
And certayn he hadde a mery noote.
Wel couthe he synge and pleye on a rote.
Of yeddynges[2] he bar utturly the prys.
His nekke whit was as the flour-de-lys.
Therto he strong was as a champioun.
He knew wel the tavernes in every toun,
And every ostiller or gay tapstere,
Bet than a lazer, or a beggere,
For unto such a worthi man as he
Acorded not, as by his faculté,
To have with sike lazars aqueyntaunce.
It is not honest,[3] it may not avaunce,
For to delen with such poraile,
But al with riche and sellers of vitaille.
And over al, ther eny profyt schulde arise,
Curteys he was, and lowe of servyse.
Ther was no man nowher so vertuous.
He was the beste begger in al his hous,
For though a widewe hadde but oo schoo,
So plesaunt was his *In principio*,[4]

---

[1] *Typet*, hood, cuculla, or cowl. These were very large, and admitted of being used as a pocket.

[2] Speght gives the choice of three meanings for this word. 1. brawling; 2. gadding up and down; 3. loud singing. The last is probably the true meaning, from the Saxon *giddian*, or *geddian*, to sing.—*See* TYRWHITT *in loco*.

[3] *Honest* is used here in the sense of the French *honnête*, becoming.

[4] The rubric at the end of the mass directs the priest to read the beginning of the Gospel of St. John. *In principio erat verbum*.—*Vide Missale Romanum*.

Yet wolde he have a ferthing or he wente.
His purchace was bettur than his rente.[1]
And rage he couthe and pleye as a whelpe,
In love-days[2] ther couthe he mochil helpe.
For ther was he not like a cloysterer,
With a thredbare cope[3] as a pore scoler,
But he was like a maister or a pope.
Of double worstede was his semy-cope,
That rounded was as a belle out of presse.
Somwhat he lipsede, for wantounesse,
To make his Englissch swete upon his tunge;
And in his harpyng, whan that he hadde sunge,
His eyghen twynkeled in his heed aright,
As don the sterres in the frosty night.
This worthi lymytour was called Huberd.
A MARCHAUNT was ther with a forked berd,[4]
In motteleye, and high on horse he sat,
Uppon his heed a Flaundrisch bever hat;
His botus clapsud faire and fetously.
His resons he spak ful solempnely,
Sownynge alway the encres of his wynnyng.
He wolde the see were kepud for eny thinge

---

[1] A proverbial expression, meaning, apparently, that he was so shrewd in trading, that his profits by buying and selling were greater than his rent.

[2] Arbitrements.—S. A day appointed for the amicable settlement of differences. Bracton, lib. v. fol. 369.—T. Both in the arbitration, and in the feast which followed, according to the English custom in all such business, the friar did good service. At these meetings for the purpose of reconciling neighbours, the clergy might be very properly present; but the satirists of those days seem to have generally laid it to their charge as a crime. Thus, in the *Vision of Pierce Plowman*:—

> 'And now is religion a ridere, a romer bi streetis,
> *A ledar of love-daiyes*,' &c.

[3] A cope is a long cloak, forming a perfect semicircle when laid flat formerly used in processions, and still worn by the bishops at coronations. The semi-cope was a short cloak or cape.

[4] A fashion common in the middle ages, as may be seen in brasses, and in many of the portraits in Lodge.

Betwixe Middulburgh and Orewelle.[1]
Wel couthe he in eschange scheeldes selle.[2]
This worthi man ful wel his witte bisette;
Ther wiste no man that he was in dette,
So estately was he of governaunce,
With his bargayns, and with his chevysaunce.
For sothe he was a worthi man withalle,
But soth to say, I not what men him calle.
A CLERK[3] ther was of Oxenford also,
That unto logik hadde longe i-go.
Al so lene was his hors as is a rake,
And he was not right fat, I undertake;
But lokede holwe, and therto soburly.
Ful thredbare was his overest courtepy,
For he hadde nought geten him yit a benefice,
Ne was not worthy to haven an office.
For him was lever have at his beddes heed
Twenty bookes, clothed in blak and reed,
Of Aristotil, and of his philosophie,
Then robus riche, or fithul, or sawtrie.
But al though he were a philosophre,
Yet hadde he but litul gold in cofre;
But al that he might of his frendes hente,
On bookes and his lernyng he it spente,
And busily gan for the soules pray
Of hem that gaf him wherwith to scolay.[4]
Of studie tooke he most cure and heede.
Not oo word spak he more than was neede;
Al that he spak it was of heye prudence,
And schort and quyk, and ful of gret sentence.

[1] *i. e.*, guarded, that he might not lose his ships by pirates or privateers.

[2] He perfectly understood the system of stock-jobbing, so as to gain by the exchange of his crowns, écus, or *shields*, in the different money-markets of Europe.

[3] A clerk means probably here, a scholar preparing for the priesthood.

[4] In many Roman Catholic countries, till very lately, it was customary for poor scholars preparing for orders to ask and receive contributions from the people for the expenses of their education.

Sownynge in moral manere was his speche,
And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche.
A SERGEANT OF LAWE, war and wys,
That often hadde ben atte parvys,[1]
Ther was also, ful riche of excellence.
Discret he was, and of gret reverence:
He semed such, his wordes were so wise,
Justice he was ful often in assise,
By patent, and by pleyn commissioun;
For his science, and for his heih renoun,
Of fees and robes had he many oon.
So gret a purchasour was ther nowher noon.
Al was fee symple to him in effecte,
His purchasyng might nought ben to him suspecte.
Nowher so besy a man as he ther nas,
And yit he semed besier than he was.
In termes hadde caas and domes alle,
That fro the tyme of kyng Will were falle.[2]
Therto he couthe endite, and make a thing,
Ther couthe no man pynche[3] at his writyng.

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[1] A barre; and here it is understood of the conference among the young counsellors, pleaders, attorneys, and students of the law, wherein the form of pleading and arguing a case is exercised. Fortescue, *De Ll. Ang.*, c. 51, says, that after the judges were risen at eleven of the clock from hearing of causes at Westminster, 'Placitantes tunc se divertunt *ad pervisum*, et alibi, consulentes cum *servientibus ad legem* (serjeants) et aliis conciliariis suis.'—S. *Parvis* means, however, a church-porch, in this case probably at Westminster, where lawyers met, as described by Speght. De Joinville furnishes another illustration:—'It was customary, after the Lord de Neeles, the good Lord de Soissons, and others that were about the King's person, had heard mass, for us to go and hear the pleadings *at the gateway*, which is now called the Court of Requests.'—*Mem. of St. Louis.*

[2] He had at his fingers' ends all legal cases and *dooms*, or decrees, which had been ruled in the courts of law since the time of William the Conqueror.

[3] *Pynche* appears to mean, to find fault with, except against, as in the anecdote told in the notes to *Marmion*, of the Knight who bore on his shield a falcon, with the motto:—

'I bear a falcon fairest of flight,
Whoso pincheth at her, his death is dight
In graith.'

Thus also in Chaucer's *Ballade of the Village*, Fortune says:—

'Thou pinchest at my mutabilitie.'

And every statute couthe he pleyn by roote.
He rood but hoomly in a medled coote,
Gird with a seynt of silk, with barres smale;
Of his array telle I no lenger tale.
A FRANKELEYN[1] ther was in his companye;
Whit was his berde, as the dayesye.
Of his complexioun he was sangwyn.
Wel loved he in the morn a sop of wyn.
To lyve in delité was al his wone,
For he was Epicurius owne sone,
That heeld opynyoun that pleyn delyt
Was verraily felicite perfyt.
An househaldere, and that gret, was he;
Seynt Julian[2] he was in his countré.
His breed, his ale, was alway after oon;
A bettre envyned man was nowher noon.
Withoute bake mete was never his hous,
Of fleissch and fissch, and that so plentyvous,
It snewed in his hous of mete and drynk,
Of alle deyntees that men cowde thynke.
Aftur the sondry sesouns of the yeer,
He chaunged hem at mete and at soper.
Ful many a fat partrich had he in mewe,
And many a brem and many a luce in stewe.
Woo was his cook, but if his sauce were
Poynant and scharp,[3] and redy al his gere.
His table dormant in his halle alway
Stood redy covered al the longe day.
At sessions ther was he lord and sire.
Ful ofte tyme he was knight of the schire.

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[1] Fortescue (*De Ll. Ang.*, c. 29) describes a Franklin as 'Paterfamilias, magnis ditatus possessionibus.'

[2] 'Ce fut celluy Julien qui est requis de ceux qui cheminent pour avoir bon hostel.'—*Leg. Dorée.* Having by mischance slain his father and mother, as a penance, he established a hospital near a dangerous ford, where he lodged and fed travellers gratuitously.

[3] *Sauce piquante* is still familiar to *gourmets*.

An anlas[1] and a gipser[2] al of silk
Heng at his gerdul, whit as morne mylk.
A schirreve hadde he ben, and a counter;
Was nowher such a worthi vavaser.
An HABURDASSHER and a CARPENTER,
A WEBBE, a DEYER, and a TAPICER,
Weren with us eeke, clothed in oo lyveré,[3]
Of a solempne and gret fraternite.
Ful freissh and newe here gere piked was;
Here knyfes were i-chapud nat with bras,
But al with silver wrought ful clene and wel,
Here gurdles and here pouches every del.
Wel semed echè of hem a fair burgeys,
To sitten in a geldehalle on the deys.[4]
Every man for the wisdom that he can,
Was schaply for to ben an aldurman.
For catel hadde they inough and rente,
And eek here wyfes wolde it wel assente;
And elles certeyn hadde thei ben to blame.
It is right fair for to be clept *madame*,
And for to go to vigilies[5] al byfore,
And han a mantel rially i-bore.

---

[1] A falchion or woodknife, which I gather out of Matthew Paris, p. 535, where he writeth thus. 'Quorum unus videns occiduam partem dorsi (of Richard Earl Marshal, then fighting for his life in Ireland) minus armis communitam, percussit eum in posteriora loricam sublevando cum quodam genere cultelli, quod vulgariter analacitus nuncupatur.'—S.

[2] A purse. In Albert Durer's beautiful etching of the Entombment, Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy man, like the Franklin, has a large purse with tassels hanging at his girdle.

[3] These tradesmen all belonged to, and wore the dress of, one livery or guild.

[4] One of the good and kindly customs of the middle ages,—a custom which was till lately observed by the Hidalgos in Spain,—was for the whole household to dine together in the great hall; but at one end was a raised platform or deys, where persons of higher rank were served, as is still the practice in our Colleges. The word *dais* is still used in East Anglia for a raised platform.

[5] It was the manner in times past, upon festival evens, called vigils, for parishioners to meet in their church-houses, or church-yards, and

A Cook thei hadde with hem for the nones,
To boyle chyknes and the mary bones,
And poudre marchant, tart, and galyngale.
Wel cowde he knowe a draught of Londone ale.
He cowde roste, sethe, broille, and frie,
Make mortreux, and wel bake a pye.
But gret harm was it, as it semede me,
That on his schyne a mormal hadde he;
For blankmanger he made with the beste.
A Schipman was ther, wonyng fer by weste:
For ought I woot, he was of Dertemouthe.
He rood upon a rouncy, as he couthe,[1]
In a gowne of faldyng to the kne.
A dagger hangyng on a laas hadde he
Aboute his nekke under his arm adoun.
The hoote somer had maad his hew al broun;
And certeinly he was a good felawe.
Ful many a draught of wyn had he drawe
From Burdeux-ward, whil that the chapman sleep.[2]
Of nyce conscience took he no keep.
If that he foughte, and hadde the heigher hand,
By water he sente hem hoom to every land.
But of his craft to rikne wel the tydes,
His stremes and his dangers him bisides,
His herbergh and his mone, his lodemenage,
Ther was non such from Hulle to Cartage.
Hardy he was, and wys to undertake;
With many a tempest hadde his berd ben schake.

---

there to have a drinking fit for the time. Here they used to end many quarrels betwixt neighbour and neighbour. Hither came the wives in comely manner, and they that were of the better sort had their mantles carried with them, as well for show as to keep them from cold at table.—S. These are probably what are forbidden in the 88th Canon of the Church of England, under the name of 'feasts, banquets, suppers, churchales, drinkings,' &c.

[1] As well as he knew how. It seems that sailors have always been bad horsemen.

[2] While the merchants, or supercargo, to whom the wine belonged, were asleep, he used to tap a cask.

He knew wel alle the havenes, as thei were,
From Scotlond to the cape of Fynestere,
And every cryk in Bretayne and in Spayne;
His barge y-clepud was the Magdelayne.
Ther was also a DOCTOUR OF PHISIK,
In al this world ne was ther non him lyk
To speke of phisik and of surgerye;
For he was groundud in astronomye.[1]
He kepte his pacient wondurly wel
In houres by his magik naturel.[2]
Wel cowde he fortune the ascendent
Of his ymages for his pacient.
He knew the cause of every maladye,
Were it of cold, or hete, or moyst, or drye,
And where thei engendrid, and of what humour;
He was a verrey parfight practisour.
The cause i-knowe, and of his harm the roote,
Anon he gaf the syke man his boote.
Ful redy hadde he his apotecaries,
To sende him dragges, and his letuaries,
For eche of hem made othur for to wynne;
Here friendschipe was not newe to begynne.
Wel knew he the olde Esculapius,
And Deiscorides, and eeke Rufus;
Old Ypocras, Haly, and Galien;[3]
Serapyon, Razis, and Avycen;

---

[1] A great part of the medical practice of the middle ages consisted in administering remedies according to the position of the planets in the heavens, as Mr. Wright observes. At the present time the horses and cows in most of the farms in England are dosed according to the astrological directions in Zadkiel's Almanack.

[2] The reading in the text, which is from the Harl. MS., conveys a piece of irony which is lost in the common one, *a ful gret del*. The practice of natural magic is alluded to in the *House of Fame*. It was probably derived from the classical heathenism.—*Vide* HOR. *Sat.*, lib. i. 8.

[3] Hippocrates and Galen were spelled Ypocras, or Hippocras, and Gallien by writers in the middle ages. These and the rest of the authors here named were the great medical authorities of those times.

Averrois, Damescen, and Constantyn;
Bernard, and Gatisden, and Gilbertyn.
Of his diete mesurable was he,
For it was of no superfluité,
But of gret norisching and digestible.
His studie was but litel on the Bible.[1]
In sangwin and in pers he clad was al,
Lined with taffata and with sendal.
And yit he was but esy in dispence;
He kepte that he wan in pestilence.[2]
For gold in phisik is a cordial;
Therfore he lovede gold in special.

A good WIF was ther of byside BATHE,
But sche was somdel deef, and that was skathe.
Of cloth-makyng[3] she hadde such an haunt,
Sche passed hem of Ypris and of Gaunt.
In al the parisshe wyf ne was ther noon
That to the offryng[4] byforn hire schulde goon,
And if ther dide, certeyn so wroth was sche,
That sche was thanne out of alle charité.
Hire keverchefs weren ful fyne of grounde;
I durste swere they weyghede ten pounde[5]
That on the Sonday were upon hire heed.
Hir hosen were of fyn scarlett reed,
Ful streyte y-teyed, and schoos ful moyste and newe.
Bold was hir face, and fair, and reed of hewe.

---

[1] See *post*, Pardoner's Prologue.

[2] Perhaps, as Mr. Wright suggests, in allusion to the great pestilence which devastated Europe in the thirteenth century, and of which there is such a magnificent description in the opening of the *Decameron*.

[3] The West of England to this day vies with Yorkshire in the excellence of its cloth.

[4] This was probably the offering on relic-Sunday, when the congregation went up to the altar in succession to kiss the relics. 'But the relics we must kiss and offer unto, especially on relic-Sunday.'—*Book of Homilies.*

[5] The high and massive head-dresses of this period, often to be seen on brasses, are still worn by the peasants of Caux, in Normandy, called Cauchoises, and are very becoming.

Sche was a worthy womman al hire lyfe,
Housbondes atte chirche dore[1] hadde sche fyfe,
Withouten othur companye in youthe;
But thereof needeth nought to speke as nouthe.
And thries hadde sche ben at Jerusalem;
Sche hadde passed many a straunge streem;
At Rome sche hadde ben, and at Boloyne,
In Galice at seynt Jame, and at Coloyne.[2]
Sche cowde moche of wandryng by the weye.
Gattothud[3] was sche, sothly for to seye.
Uppon an amblere esely sche sat,
Wymplid ful wel, and on hire heed an hat
As brood as is a bocler or a targe;
A foot-mantel aboute hire hupes large,
And on hire feet a paire of spores scharpe.[4]
In felawschipe wel cowde lawghe and carpe.
Of remedyes of love sche knew parchaunce,
For of that art sche knew the olde daunce.
A good man was ther of religioun,
And was a pore PERSOUN of a toun;[5]
But riche he was of holy thought and werk.
He was also a lerned man, a clerk
That Cristes gospel gladly wolde preche;
His parischens devoutly wolde he teche.

---

[1] According to the old custom, the priest married the couple at the church door, and immediately afterwards proceeded to the altar to celebrate mass, at which the newly-married persons communicated. The rubrics in the modern English office are to the same effect.

[2] She had probably gone to Cologne on a pilgrimage to the relics of the Three Kings, or Wise Men of the East, said to be there preserved. The body of St. James the Apostle was supposed to have been carried in a ship without a rudder to Galicia, and was preserved at Compostella, whither there was a prodigious resort of pilgrims.

[3] Speght reads *cat-tothed*, of which the sense seems more obvious. It would mean of teeth uneven and far asunder, a peculiarity which gives a bold look, and so may be considered characteristic.

[4] It appears she bestrode her horse, like the paysannes in France.

[5] Parson or parish priest, so called because he is the *persona ecclesiæ*, the representative or mouth-piece, through whom the Church, that is the Christians, in that particular parish, addresses its worship to God. —See BLACKSTONE'S *Comm.*—*Town* here means *townland* or parish.

Benigne he was, and wonder diligent,
And in adversite ful pacient;
And such he was i-proved ofte sithes.
Ful loth were him to curse for his tythes,[1]
But rather wolde he geven out of dowte,
Unto his pore parisschens aboute,
Of his offrynge, and eek of his substaunce.[2]
He cowde in litel thing han suffisance.
Wyd was his parisch, and houses fer asondur,
But he ne lafte not for reyne ne thondur,
In siknesse ne in meschief to visite
The ferrest in his parissche, moche and lite,
Uppon his feet, and in his hond a staf.
This noble ensample unto his scheep he gaf,
That ferst he wroughte, and after that he taughte,
Out of the gospel he tho wordes caughte,
And this figure he addid yit therto,
That if gold ruste, what schulde yren doo?
For if a prest be foul, on whom we truste,
No wondur is a lewid man to ruste;
And schame it is, if that a prest take kepe,
A schiten schepperd and a clene schepe;
Wel oughte a prest ensample for to give,
By his clennesse, how that his scheep schulde lyve.
He sette not his benefice to huyre,
And lefte his scheep encombred in the myre,
And ran to Londone, unto seynte Poules,
To seeken him a chaunterie for soules,[3]
Or with a brethurhede be withholde;[4]
But dwelte at hoom, and kepte wel his folde,

---

[1] Refusal to pay tithes was punishable with the lesser excommunication.

[2] Of what he obtained by the voluntary offerings of his parishioners, as well as by his benefice.

[3] A chantry for souls was an endowment for a priest to sing or chant masses for the benefit of the souls of the founders. The parson did not leave a curate to perform his parochial duties, and seek one of these sinecures for himself in Saint Paul's.

[4] To be maintained in a religious house.

So that the wolfe ne made it not myscarye.
He was a schepperde and no mercenarie;[1]
And though he holy were, and vertuous,
He was to senful man nought dispitous,
Ne of his speche daungerous ne digne,
But in his teching discret and benigne.
To drawe folk to heven by fairnesse,
By good ensample, was his busynesse:
But it were eny persone obstinat,
What so he were of high or lowe estat,
Him wolde he snybbe scharply for the nones.
A bettre preest I trowe ther nowher non is.
He waytud after no pompe ne reverence,
Ne maked him a spiced conscience,[2]
But Cristes lore, and his apostles twelve,
He taught, and ferst he folwed it himselve.
With him ther was a PLOUGHMAN, his brothur,
That hadde i lad of dong ful many a fothur.
A trewe swynker and a good was hee,
Lyvynge in pees and parfight charitee.
God loved he best with al his trewe herte
At alle tymes, though him gained or smerte,
And thanne his neighebour right as himselve.
He wolde threisshe, and therto dyke and delve,

---

[1] John x. 11.

[2] The meaning is not obvious, and Tyrwhitt professes not to understand it. It may signify that his conscience was not sophisticated by the subtilties of casuistry, compared to far-fetched spices, but guided by the plain words of Scripture.

It is quite natural that Chaucer, the friend of John of Gaunt, should praise the parochial clergy who were poor, and therefore not formidable, at the expense of the rich monastic orders, who formed the only barrier which then existed against the despotic power of the aristocracy. It should also be remembered that the same poverty which made the secular clergy humble and frugal, left them also illiterate; and that it is to the Benedictines, and their magnificent libraries, that we owe the preservation, in an iron age, not only of the Fathers, but of Homer, of Virgil, and of Cicero.—See Mr. Macaulay's excellent remarks upon this subject in his *History of England*, vol. i. p. 6.

For Cristes sake, with every pore wight,
Withouten huyre, if it laye in his might.
His tythes payede he ful faire and wel,
Bathe of his owne swynk and his catel.
In a tabbard he rood upon a mere.[1]
Ther was also a reeve and a mellere,
A sompnour and a pardoner also,
A maunciple, and my self, ther was no mo.
The MELLERE was a stout carl for the nones,
Ful big he was of braun, and eek of boones;
That prevede wel, for over al ther he cam,
At wrastlynge he wolde bere awey the ram.[2]
He was schort schuldred, broode, a thikke knarre,
Ther nas no dore that he nold heve of harre,
Or breke it with a rennyng with his heed.
His berd as ony sowe or fox was reed,
And therto brood, as though it were a spade.
Upon the cop right of his nose he hade
A werte, and theron stood a tuft of heres,
Reede as the berstles of a souwes eerés.
His nose-thurles blake were and wyde.
A sword and a bocler baar he by his side,
His mouth as wyde was as a gret forneys.
He was a janglér, and a golyardeys,
And that was most of synne and harlotries.
Wel cowde he stele corn, and tollen thries;[3]
And yet he had a thombe of gold pardé.[4]
A whight cote and blewe hood wered he.

---

[1] The ploughman's tabard was probably what we should call a blouse, or smock-frock. No one of any pretensions rode upon a mare in the middle ages.

[2] A ram was the usual prize at wrestling matches.—See the *Cokc's Tale of Gamelyn.*

[3] Besides the usual payment in money for grinding corn, millers are always allowed what is called 'toll,' amounting to 4lbs. out of every sack of flour.

[4] If the allusion be, as is most probable, to the old proverb, *Every honest miller has a thumb of gold*, the passage may mean, that our miller, notwithstanding his thefts, was an *honest miller*,—*i. e.*, as honest as his brethren.—T.

A baggepipe[1] cowde he blowe and sowne,
And therwithal he brought us out of towne.
A gentil MAUNCIPLE was ther of a temple,
Of which achatours mighten take exemple
For to be wys in beyying of vitaille.
For whethur that he payde, or took by taille,[2]
Algate he wayted so in his acate,
That he was ay biforn and in good state.
Now is not that of God a ful fair grace,
That such a lewed mannes wit schal pace
The wisdom of an heep of lernede men?
Of maystres hadde moo than thries ten,
That were of lawe expert and curious;
Of which ther were a doseyn in an house,
Worthi to be stiwardes of reute and lond
Of any lord that is in Engelond,
To make him lyve by his propre good,
In honour detteles, but if he were wood,
Or lyve as scarsly as he can desire;
And able for to helpen al a schire
In any caas that mighte falle or happe;
And yit this mauncipie sette here alle her cappe.[3]
The REEVE was a sklendre colerik man,
His berd was schave as neigh as ever he can.
His heer was by his eres neighe[4] i-shorn.
His top was dockud lyk a preest biforn.

[1] The bagpipe has long since disappeared from England, where it was once a favourite among the lower orders. In Albert Durer's etching of the Nativity, one of the shepherds carries a bagpipe; and it may yet be seen in Italy.

[2] Marked the reckoning on a tally, bought on credit; from *tailler*, to cut.

[3] To set a man's cap is to cheat him. *Aller* is the genitive plural of alle, and the passage means, therefore, set the cap of them all,—*i. e.*, cheated them all. The same construction occurs afterwards—'Up roos our hoste, and was our althur (*aller*) cok,' was cock for us all,—*i. e.*, wakened and gathered us together as a cock does his hens. In modern German, *aller* is used in the same way, as *der aller beste*, the best of all.

[4] This is the reading of the Harl. MS. Mr. Wright substitutes *rounde*.

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Ful longe wern his leggus, and ful lene,
Al like a staff, ther was no calf y-sene.
Wel cowde he kepe a gerner and a bynne;
Ther was non auditour cowde on him wynne.
Wel wist he by the drought, and by the reyn,
The yeeldyng of his seed, and of his greyn.
His lordes scheep, his nete,[1] and his dayerie,
His swyn, his hors, his stoor, and his pultrie,
Was holly in this reeves governynge,
And by his covenaunt gaf the rekenynge,
Syn that his lord was twenti yeer of age;
Ther couthe noman bringe him in arrerage.
Ther nas ballif, ne herde, ne other hyne,
That they ne knewe his sleight and his covyne;
They were adrad of him, as of the deth.
His wonyng was ful fair upon an heth,
With grene trees i-schadewed was his place.
He cowde bettre than his lord purchace.
Ful riche he was i-stored prively,
His lord wel couthe he plese subtilly,
To geve and lene him of his owne good,
And have a thank; a cote, and eek an hood.
In youthe he lerned hadde a good mester;
He was a wel good wright, a carpenter.
This reeve sat upon a wel good stot,[2]
That was a pomely gray, and highte Scot.
A long surcote of pers[3] uppon he hadde,
And by his side he bar a rusty bladde.

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[1] The Harl. MS. reads *meet*, but all the editions *nete*, which is evidently the true reading. The neat stock comes in naturally in the enumeration of the different kinds of cattle; but the Reeve would have nothing to do with the keeping of his landlord's meat.

[2] Speght interprets this a young horse. It properly means a young bullock; but the names of young animals are apt to be indiscriminately applied to different species. The name given to the horse of the Reeve, who lived at Bawdeswell, in Norfolk, is a curious instance of Chaucer's accuracy; for to this day there is scarcely a farm in Norfolk or Suffolk in which one of the horses is not called Scot. As the name has no meaning, it must be attributed to an immemorial tradition.

[3] Harl. MS., *blew*. *Pers*, Mr. Wright says, was of a sky-blue colour.

Of Northfolk was this reeve of which I telle,
Byside a toun men callen Baldeswelle.
Tukkud he was, as is a frere, aboute,
And ever he rood the hynderest of the route.
A SOMPNOUR was ther with us in that place,
That hadde a fyr-reed cherubynes face,[1]
For sawceflem he was, with eyghen narwe.
As hoot he was, and leccherous, as a sparwe,
With skalled browes blak, and piled berd;
Of his visage children weren sore aferd.
Ther nas quyksilver, litarge, ne brimstone,
Boras, ceruce, ne oille of tartre noon,[2]
Ne oynement that wolde clense and byte,
That him might helpen of his whelkes white,
Ne of the knobbes sittyng on his cheekes.
Wel loved he garleek, oynouns, and ek leekes,
And for to drinke strong wyn reed as blood.
Thanne wolde he speke, and crye as he were wood.
And whan that he wel dronken hadde the wyn,
Than wolde he speke no word but Latyn.
A fewe termes hadde he, two or thre,
That he hadde lerned out of som decree;
No wondur is, he herde it al the day;
And eek ye knowe wel, how that a jay
Can clepe Watte, as wel as can the pope.
But who so wolde in othur thing him grope,
Thanne hadde he spent al his philosophie,
Ay, *Questio quid juris*,[3] wolde he crye,
He was a gentil harlot[4] and a kynde;
A bettre felaw schulde men nowher fynde.

[1] H. Stephens, *Apol. Herod*, lib. i. c. 30, quotes the same thought from a French epigram:—'Nos grand docteurs au Cherubin visage.'—T.

[2] Usual remedies in the Materia Medica of that period for scorbutic eruptions.

[3] This kind of question occurs frequently in *Ralph de Hengham*. After having stated a case he adds, *Quid juris?* and then proceeds to give the answer to it.—T.

[4] The name of harlot was originally given to men as well as women,

He wolde suffre for a quart of wyn
A good felawe to han his concubyn
A twelve moneth, and excuse him atte fulle.
And prively a fynch eek cowde he pulle.
And if he fond owher a good felawe,
He wolde teche him to have non awe
In such a caas of the archedecknes curs,[1]
But if a mannes sole were in his purs;
For in his purs he scholde punyssched be.
'Purs is the ercedeknes helle,' quod he.
But well I woot he lyeth right in dede;
Of cursyng oweth ech gulty man to drede;
For curs wol slee right as assoillyng saveth;
And also ware of him a *significavit*.[2]
In daunger[3] he hadde at his own assise
The yonge gurles of the diocise,
And knew here counseil, and was al here red.[4]
A garland[5] had he set upon his heed,
As gret as it were for an ale-stake;
A bokeler had he maad him of a cake.[6]
With him ther rood a gentil PARDONER
Of Rouncival,[7] his frend and his comper,

---

as in the *Roman de la Rose*, *roi des Ribaulx* is by Chaucer translated *king of harlots*.

[1] The meaning is,—he would teach his friends to consider the Archdeacon's excommunication as a mere matter of money, because it could be bought off.

[2] *Significavit* means the writ *de excommunicato capiendo*, being its initial word.

[3] In his jurisdiction.

[4] Speght reads, *was of her red*, which gives a more obvious sense; but in either case the passage means, *was of their counsel*, gave them his advice.

[5] Of this custom there is an example in the *Knight's Tale*, line 1509.

[6] A grotesque trick, such as the common people delight in. The peasants of Rouen, on their march to Paris to join in the Revolution of 1830, in the same spirit, carried their loaves of bread stuck on their pikes.

[7] Of Rounceval. Tyrwhitt supposed that this was the name of some fraternity, and states that there was an *Hospital Beatæ Mariæ de Rounceyvalle, in Charing, London*.

That streyt was comen from the court of Rome.
Ful lowde he sang, Come hider, love, to me.[1]
This sompnour bar to him a stif burdoun,
Was nevere trompe of half so gret a soun.
This pardoner hadde heer as yelwe as wex,
But smothe it heng, as doth a strike of flex;
By unces hynge his lokkes that he hadde,
And therwith he his schuldres overspradde.
Ful thenne it lay, by culpons on and oon,
But hood, for jolitee, ne wered he noon,
For it was trussud up in his walet.
Him thought he rood al of the newe get,[2]
Dischevele, sauf his cappe, he rood al bare.
Suche glaryng eyghen hadde he as an hare.
A vernicle[3] hadde he sowed on his cappe.
His walet lay byforn him in his lappe,
Bret ful of pardoun[4] come from Rome al hoot.
A voys he hadde as smale as eny goot.
No berd ne hadde he, ne never scholde have,
As smothe it was as it ware late i-schave;
I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare.
But of his craft, fro Berwyk unto Ware,
Ne was ther such another pardoner.
For in his male he hadde a pilwebeer,

---

[1] This was probably the burthen of some popular song. The fact of *to me* rhyming to Rome, illustrates the manner in which the final *e* must be pronounced in Chaucer's poetry.

[2] Of the new fashion. *Gette* or *gett* (for the MSS. differ) is used in the same sense by Occleve, *de Reg. Princ.* The Pardoner rode without the usual hood on his head, dischevele or uncovered; he had only his cappe, cope, or short cloak.

[3] A painting of the face of Christ. 'Inter has feminas una fuit Bernice, sive Veronice, vulgo Veronica, quæ sudarium Christo exhibens, ut faciem sudore et sanguine madentem abstergeret, ab eo illud recepit, cum impressa in illo ejusdem Christi effigie, ut habet Christiana traditio.'—*Corn. a Lapide in S. Matt.* xxvii. 32.

[4] Brim-full of indulgences granted by the Court of Rome. The theory of pardons or indulgences is that they are commutations, in consideration of some act of devotion, of the long temporal penalties for sin required by the Canons of the Primitive Church.

Which, that he saide, was oure lady veyl:
He seide, he hadde a gobet of the seyl
That seynt Petur hadde, whan that he wente
Uppon the see, till Jhesu Crist him hente.
He hadde a cros of latoun ful of stones,
And in a glas he hadde pigges bones.
But with thise reliques, whanne that he fand
A pore persoun dwellyng uppon land,
Upon a day he gat him more moneye
Than that the persoun gat in monthes tweye.
And thus with feyned flaterie and japes,
He made the persoun and the people his apes.
But trewely to tellen atte laste,
He was in churche a noble ecclesiaste.
Wel cowde he rede a lessoun or a storye,
But altherbest[1] he sang an offertorie;[2]
For wel wyst he, whan that song was songe,
He moste preche, and wel affyle his tunge,
To wynne silver, as he right wel cowde;
Therefore he sang ful meriely and lowde.
Now have I told you schortly in a clause
Thestat, tharray, the nombre, and eek the cause
Why that assembled was this companye
In Southwerk at this gentil ostelrie,
That highte the Tabbard, faste by the Belle.
But now is tyme to yow for to telle
How that we bare us in that ilke night,
Whan we were in that ostelrie alight;
And aftur wol I telle of oure viage,
And al the remenaunt of oure pilgrimage.

[1] *Altherbest* means best of all; so the German *allerbeste*—See *ante*, p. 101, note 3.

[2] A text of Scripture said or sung after the Nicene Creed in the mass, during which the people made their offerings; and immediately after followed the sermon. 'And while we offer (that we should not be weary or repent us of our cost) the music and minstrelsy goeth merrily all the offertory time.'—*Book of Homilies.*

But ferst I pray you of your curtesie,
That ye ne rette[1] it nat my vilanye,
Though that I speke al pleyn in this matere,
To telle you here wordes and here cheere;
Ne though I speke here wordes propurly.
For this ye knowen al so wel as I,
Who so schal telle a tale aftur a man,
He moste reherce, as neigh as ever he can,
Every word, if it be in his charge,
Al speke he never so rudely ne large;
Or elles he moot telle his tale untrewe,
Or feyne thing, or fynde wordes newe.
He may not spare, though he were his brothur;
He moste as wel sey oo word as anothur.
Crist spak himself ful broode in holy writ,
And wel ye woot no vilanye is it.
Eke Plato seith, who so that can him rede,
The wordes mot be cosyn[2] to the dede.
Also I pray you to forgeve it me,
Al have I folk nat set in here degre
Here in this tale, as that thei schulde stonde;
My witt is schorte,[3] ye may wel undurstonde.
Greet cheere made oure ost us everichon,
And to the souper sette he us anon;
And served us with vitaille atte beste.
Strong was the wyn, and wel to drynke us leste.

---

[1] That you interpret it not as a proof of my base breeding. *Rette*, sometimes *arette*, is from the Saxon *gerehtan*, to explain, to interpret.—RASKE'S *Gram. Ang. Sax.*, Part I. § 141.

[2] From Boethius, *De Consolatione*, lib. iii., thus translated by Chaucer—'That needs the words mote been cosins to the things of which they speaken.' His excuse for the broadness of the language which he puts into the mouths of his pilgrims goes upon the assumption that he is relating an incident which actually took place, and which he is therefore bound not to falsify. This piece of *naïveté* is affected to give an air of reality to the fiction upon which the poem is founded.

[3] Harl. MS., *thynne*.

A semely man oure ooste was withalle
For to han been a marchal in an halle;
A large man was he with eyghen stepe,
A fairere burgeys is ther noon in Chepe:
Bold of his speche, and wys and well i-taught,
And of manhede lakkede he right naught.
Eke therto he was right a mery man,
And after soper playen he bygan,
And spak of myrthe among othur thinges,
Whan that we hadde maad our rekenynges;
And sayde thus: 'Lo, lordynges, trewely
Ye ben to me right welcome hertily:
For by my trouthe, if that I schal not lye,
I ne saugh this yeer so mery a companye
At oones in this herbergh as is now.
Fayn wold I do yow merthe, wiste I how.
And of a merthe I am right now bythought,
To doon you eese, and it schal coste nought.
Ye goon to Caunturbury; God you speede,
The blisful martir quyte you youre meede!
And wel I woot, as ye gon by the weye,
Ye schapen yow to talken and to pleye;
For trewely comfort ne merthe is noon
To ryde by the weye domb as a stoon;
And therfore wol I make you disport,
As I seyde erst, and do you som confort.
And if yow liketh alle by oon assent
Now for to standen at my juggement;
And for to werken as I schal you seye,
To morwe, whan ye riden by the weye,
Now by my fadres soule that is deed,
But ye be merye, smyteth of myn heed.
Hold up youre hond withoute more speche.'
Oure counseil was not longe for to seche;
Us thought it nas nat worth to make it wys,[1]
And graunted him withoute more avys,

[1] To make it a matter of wisdom or deliberation. So in the *Reeve's Tale*, *straunge made it* signifies the priest made it a matter of difficulty. —T. See p. 222.

And bad him seie his verdite, as him leste.
'Lordynges,' quoth he, 'now herkeneth for the beste;
But taketh not, I pray you, in disdayn;
This is the poynt, to speken schort and playn,
That ech of yow to schorte with youre weie,
In this viage, schal telle tales tweye,
To Caunturburi-ward, I mene it so,[1]
And hom-ward he schal tellen othur tuo,
Of aventures that ther han bifalle.
And which of yow that bereth him best of alle,
That is to seye, that telleth in this caas
Tales of best sentence and of solas,
Schal han a soper at your alther cost
Here in this place sittynge by this post,
Whan that we comen ageyn from Canturbery.
And for to make you the more mery,
I wol myselven gladly with you ryde,
Right at myn owen cost, and be youre gyde.
And whoso wole my juggement withseie
Schal paye for al we spenden by the weye.
And if ye vouchesauf that it be so,
Telle me anoon, withouten wordes moo,
And I wole erely schappe me therfore.'
This thing was graunted, and oure othus swore
With ful glad herte, and prayden him also
That he would vouchesauf for to doon so,
And that he wolde ben oure governour,
And of our tales jugge and reportour,
And sette a souper at a certeyn prys;
And we wolde rewled be at his devys,

---

[1] Tyrwhitt proposes to read,—

I mene it o,
And homward he shall tellen other to,

in order to reconcile the original agreement with the actual number of tales recounted. But besides the awkardness of the expression, and the fact that there is no authority for it in the MSS., it seems much preferable to adopt Mr. Wright's judicious theory, that the poem was left in an unfinished state by Chaucer at his death, and was arranged for publication, from detached papers, by his literary executor.

In heygh and lowe; and thus by oon assent
We been acorded to his juggement.
And therupon the wyn was fet anoon;
We dronken, and to reste wente echoon,
Withouten eny lengere taryinge.
A morwe whan that the day bigan to sprynge,
Up roos oure ost, and was oure althur cok,[1]
And gaderud us togider all in a flok,
And forth we riden a litel more than paas,[2]
Unto the waterynge of seint Thomas.[3]
And there oure ost bigan his hors areste,
And seyde; 'Lordus, herkeneth if yow leste.
Ye woot youre forward, and I it you recorde.
If eve-song and morwe-song accorde,[4]
Let se now who schal telle ferst a tale.
As evere I moote drinke wyn or ale,
Who so be rebel to my juggement
Schal paye for al that by the weye is spent.
Now draweth cut,[5] er that we forther twynne;
Which that hath the schortest schal bygynne.'
'Sire knight,' quoth he, 'maister and my lord,
Now draweth cut, for that is myn acord.
Cometh nerr,' quoth he, 'my lady prioresse;
And ye, sir clerk, lat be your schamfastnesse,
Ne studieth nat; ley hand to, every man.'
Anon to drawen every wight bigan,
And schortly for to tellen as it was,
Were it by aventure, or sort, or cas,

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[1] See *ante*, p. 101, note 3.

[2] *To pace* means to walk; *a litlle more than pace* will therefore mean a little faster than walking, *i. e.*, at a slow trot.

[3] Mr. Wright says, that the *Watering of St. Thomas*, mentioned frequently by the old dramatists, was at the second milestone on the old Canterbury-road.

[4] Apparently a proverbial expression alluding to the services of the Church, and meaning, if you are resolved in the morning to keep the promise made over night.

[5] Draw lots. Froissart calls it, *tirer à la longue paille*, to draw for the long straw. *Cut*, then, means, the straw cut into different lengths.

The soth is this, the cut fil to the knight,
Of which full glad and blithe was every wight;
And telle he moste his tale as was resoun,
By forward and by composicioun,
As ye han herd; what needeth wordes moe?
And whan this goode man seigh that it was so,
As he that wys was and obedient
To kepe his forward by his fre assent,
He seyde: 'Syn I schal bygynne the game,
What, welcome be thou cut, a Goddus name![1]
Now lat us ryde, and herkneth what I seye.'
And with that word we ridden forth oure weye;
And he bigan with right a merie chere
His tale, and seide right in this manere.

THE KNIGHTES TALE.

[THE outline of this tale is taken from the *Theseida*, an heroic poem in twelve books by Boccaccio. Tyrwhitt conjectures that a literal translation of the *Theseida* had already appeared from the pen of Chaucer, who enumerates it along with his other works in the *Legende of Gode Women*, under the name of *Al the Love of Palamon and Arcite*. This translation, if it ever existed, is now lost; but it has reappeared, as he supposes, in the *Canterbury Tales*, concentrated and improved in this charming story of chivalry, so appropriately narrated by the 'perfight, gentil knight.'

The origin of the story is involved in obscurity. Tyrwhitt thinks it scarcely credible that it is of Boccaccio's own invention; and the assertion of the novelist that he translated it into 'vulgar Latin,' meaning Italian, from *una antichissima storia*, he conceives to be a mere literary fiction, after the manner of the French writers of romances, who almost always

[1] It is characteristic of the Knight's good breeding and knowledge of the world to tell his tale frankly and cheerfully, and without endeavouring to excuse himself.

profess to have translated from some old *Latin* chronicle preserved at St. Denys. He inclines to the theory that it is of Greek original, and that it assumed its present form as a popular romance, after the Norman princes had introduced the manners of chivalry into their Sicilian and Italian dominions.

On the other hand, it should be remembered that the opening of the *Theseida*, as well as of the *Knightes Tale*, and many passages throughout both poems, are palpably taken from the *Thebais* of Statius; and therefore, in the absence of any evidence of the existence of such a romance as Tyrwhitt supposes, it does not seem to be claiming too much for Boccaccio's powers of invention, to suppose that he adapted to his conception of heroic times, derived from the *Thebais*, the very ordinary plot of rival lovers staking the possession of their mistress on the fortune of single combat. The *incognito* of Œdipus at the court of Laius, and the sojourn of Polynices at that of Adrastus, might have suggested the idea of Arcite's return in disguise to Athens: and if the Lady Emilia, in accordance with chivalrous ideas, be substituted for the kingdom of Thebes, and Palamon and Arcite for Eteocles and Polynices, the *Thebais* supplies the story at once. If this theory be tenable, the change which the story undergoes in its transition from the spirit of the old mythology, delighting in the contemplation of a family goaded, from generation to generation, by the decrees of fate to the commission of incest and murder in their most horrible forms, to that of Christianity, even when demoralized by hatred, jealousy, and war, is deeply suggestive.

In obedience to the literary canon which requires that every epic poem shall consist of twelve books, the *Theseida* is swelled by tedious descriptions, which the English poet, either from taste or the necessities of his plan, has happily curtailed, or wholly omitted. In the lines—

> His spiryt chaunged was, and wente ther
> As I cam never, I can nat tellen wher;
> Therefore I stynt.

Chaucer is supposed by Tyrwhitt to have intended to ridicule

Boccaccio's pompous description of the passage of Arcite's soul to Heaven, and the reader cannot but feel obliged to him for abridging the pedantic catalogue given in the *Theseida* of the heroes of antiquity who took part in the tournament.

Although all readers must appreciate Tyrwhitt's extensive learning and zealous industry in illustrating *The Canterbury Tales* from every possible source, few will now agree with his criticism on the incongruity of Chaucer's treatment of heroic subjects. A story of heroic times, clothed in the costume of chivalry, appears to him as incongruous as Macbeth attired in the square-tailed coat and knee-breeches of the reign of George the Second. But if Chaucer, instead of giving us his own conception of how Theseus looked and spoke, and how Palamon and Arcite loved and fought, had searched the ancients for precedents of heroic speeches, and classic loves and combats, it may safely be affirmed that a new edition of *The Canterbury Tales* would not now be called for. The poet's aim should be to give an accurate picture, not necessarily of scenes as they actually took place, but of the conception he had of them in his own mind. In order to move the passions of his readers, it is necessary that his descriptions should be drawn direct from the stores of his own experience. What can be more insipid than a cento from the works of the ancients, in which no word or idea is permitted to appear unless it be authenticated, so to speak, by classical authority?

But it may still be objected, why then lay the scene in the heroic, rather than in the chivalrous ages? And to this it may be answered, that the remoteness of the scene enables the poet to indulge his fancy with greater freedom, and to invest with some degree of verisimilitude adventures which, if assigned to the contemporary age, would be rejected as improbable. It may be added, also, that the shadowy and mysterious forms of periods anterior to authentic history predispose the mind to those emotions which it is the poet's object to awaken.

It must be acknowledged that Chaucer, like Shakespeare,

cared little from whence he obtained the raw material of his tales, provided he could impress them with the stamp of his own genius. He plagiarises, not only from others, but even from himself. This can hardly be attributed to poverty of imagination in the author of the *House of Fame*. It appears rather to be an instance of that *economy of genius* observable in the art of the middle ages, when every figure in a picture had its distinctive form and attitude, and when even the colour of each personage's dress was settled by tradition. The object of the artist, whether poet, painter, or architect, was to move the passions, not to display his own power of invention; he therefore, without scruple, adopted the historical form, or the well-known legend; and trusted to his mode of treatment, within the prescribed limits, for producing his effect. But, in truth, the interest of a poem is not in the least impaired by the knowledge that the *incidents* are not the product of the poet's own invention; on the contrary, if they are supposed to be founded on fact, the interest is increased. It is when the reader suspects that he is called upon to sympathise with *feelings* and *passions* which the poet himself never felt, and to picture to his imagination usages which the poet himself never realized, that he resents the attempt to impose upon him by fine words, and to harrow his soul with emotions at second-hand. Such is not Chaucer's plan; the leading incidents of the story he has received from others, but the conception and working out of the characters are all his own. The reader feels convinced that, in Theseus, the poet has given his own idea, probably derived from actual observation, of a chivalrous monarch, arbitrary from the habit of command, and hot-tempered, but generous and easily appeased; tenderly alive to the feelings and weaknesses of others, and endowed with that light-hearted gaiety and keen appreciation of humour, which are so often observed to accompany high breeding and a noble nature.

Tyrwhitt, in his matter-of-fact way, has noticed three principal circumstances in which Chaucer, departing from his original, has shown his superiority in the knowledge of

human nature and in poetical judgment. '1. By supposing Emilia to be seen first by Palamon, he gives him an advantage over his rival, which makes the catastrophe more consonant to poetical justice. 2. The picture which Boccaccio has exhibited of two young princes, violently enamoured of the same object without jealousy or rivalship, if not absolutely unnatural, is certainly very insipid and unpoetical. 3. As no consequence is to follow from their being seen by Emilia at this time, it is better, I think, to suppose, as Chaucer has done, that they are not seen by her.' He might have added, that a strict adherence to the *Theseida* in this last particular, would have deprived Theseus of one capital point in his witty reflections upon the folly of lovers.]

WHILOM, as olde stories tellen us,
Ther was a duk that highte Theseus;
Of Athenes he was lord and governour,
And in his tyme swich a conquerour,
That gretter was ther non under the sonne.
Ful many a riche contre hadde he wonne;
That with his wisdam and his chivalrie
He conquered al the regne of Femynye,[1]
That whilom was i-cleped Cithea;[2]
And weddede the queen Ipolita,
And brought hire hoom with him in his contré
With moche glorie and gret solempnité,
And eek hire yonge suster Emelye.
And thus with victorie and with melodye
Lete I this noble duk to Athenes ryde,
And al his ost, in armes him biside.
And certes, if it nere to long to heere,
I wolde han told yow fully the manere,
How wonnen was the regne of Femenye
By Theseus, and by his chivalrye;
And of the grete bataille for the nones
Bytwix Athenes[3] and the Amazones;

[1] Kingdom of the Amazons, so called from *fœmina*, a woman.
[2] Scythia.
[3] Athenians.

And how asegid was Ypolita,
The faire hardy quyen of Cithea;
And of the feste that was at hire weddynge,
And of the tempest[1] at hire hoom comynge;
But al that thing I most as now forbere.
I have, God wot, a large feeld to ere,
And wayke ben the oxen in my plough,
The remenaunt of the tale is long inough;
I wol not lette eek non of al this rowte
Lat every felawe telle his tale aboute,
And lat see now who schal the soper wynne,
And ther I lafte, I wolde agayn begynne.
This duk, of whom I make mencioun,
Whan he was comen almost unto the toun,
In al his wele and in his moste pryde,
He was war, as he cast his eyghe aside,
Wher that ther kneled in the hye weye
A compaiye of ladies, tweye and tweye,
Ech after other, clad in clothes blake;
But such a cry and such a woo they make,
That in this world nys creature[2] lyvynge,
That herde such another waymentynge,
And of that cry ne wolde they never stenten,
Til they the reynes of his bridel henten.
'What folk be ye that at myn hom comynge
Pertourben so my feste with cryenge?'
Quod Theseus, 'have ye so gret envye
Of myn honour, that thus compleyne and crie?

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[1] Tyrwhitt for *tempest* reads *temple*, on the authority of two MSS., and supports his reading by a reference to the *Theseida*, which says nothing of a tempest, but, on the contrary, states that the passage—

'Tosto fornito (finito?) fu e senza pene;'

whereas Theseus is represented as making an offering, on his return, in the Temple of Pallas, on the same principle on which the knight makes his pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Thomas, on his safe return from the wars. Mr. Wright, however, rejects Tyrwhitt's reading, considering the MSS. not of sufficient authority. And it must be owned that to express a pilgrimage to a temple by the word '*temple*' is very unusual.

[2] This word is always a trisyllable, as in French.

Or who hath yow misboden, or offendid?
And telleth me if it may ben amendid;
And why that ye ben clad thus al in blak?'
The oldest lady of hem alle spak,
When sche had swowned with a dedly chere,
That it was routhe for to seen or heere;
And seyde: 'Lord, to whom Fortune hath geven
Victorie, and as a conquerour lyven,[1]
Nought greveth us youre glorie and honour;
But we beseken mercy and socour.
Have mercy on oure woo and oure distresse.
Som drope of pitee, thurgh youre gentilnesse,
Uppon us wrecchede wommen lat thou falle.
For certus, lord, ther nys noon of us alle,
That sche nath ben a duchesse or a queene;
Now be we caytifs, as it is well seene:
Thanked be Fortune, and hire false wheel,
That noon estat assureth to ben weel.
And certus, lord, to abiden youre presence
Here in the temple of the goddesse Clemence
We han ben waytynge al this fourtenight;
Now helpe us, lord, syn it is in thy might.
I wrecche, which that wepe and waylle thus,
Was whilom wyf to kyng Capaneus,
That starf at Thebes, cursed be that day;
And alle we that ben in this array,
And maken all this lamentacioun,
We leften alle oure housbondes at the toun,
Whil that the sege ther aboute lay.
And yet the olde Creon, welaway!
That lord is now of Thebes the citee,
Fulfilde of ire and of iniquité,
He for despyt, and for his tyrannye,
To do the deede bodyes vilonye,

[1] Tyrwhitt's reading *to lyven*, by making 'victory' one foot, improves the metre, though it gives a redundant syllable. It seems impossible to scan the line as it here stands.

Of alle oure lordes, which that ben i-slawe,
Hath alle the bodies on an heep y-drawe,
And wol not suffren hem by noon assent
Nother to ben y-buried nor y-brent,
But maketh houndes ete hem in despite.'
And with that word, withoute more respite,
They fillen gruf, and criden pitously,
'Have on us wrecched wommen som mercy,
And lat oure sorwe synken in thyn herte.'
This gentil duke doun from his courser sterte
With herte pitous, whan he herde hem speke.
Him thoughte that his herte wolde breke,
Whan he seyh hem so piteous and so maat,
That whilom weren of so gret estat.
And in his armes he hem all up hente,
And hem conforteth in ful good entente;
And swor his oth, as he was trewe knight,
He wolde do so ferforthly his might
Upon the tyraunt Creon hem to wreke,
That all the people of Grece scholde speke
How Creon was of Theseus y-served,
As he that hath his deth right wel deserved.
And right anoon, withoute eny abood
His baner he desplayeth,[1] and forth rood

[1] The displaying of the banner was the summons to the troops to assemble for military service. So when Charles I. formally displayed the royal standard, he intended by that act to assert his prerogative, denied by the Parliament, of calling out the militia, then the only military force of the kingdom. The following description of the banner or standard of Richard I. may serve to illustrate this passage. 'It was formed of a long beam, like the mast of a ship, made of most solid ceiled work, on four wheels, put together with joints, bound with iron, and to all appearance no sword or axe could cut, or fire injure it. A chosen body of soldiers were generally appointed to guard it, especially in a combat on the plains, lest by any hostile attack it should be broken or fall down; for if it fell by any accident, the army would be dispersed and put into confusion. For they are dismayed when it does not appear, and think that their general must be overcome by faintheartedness when they do not see his standard flying.... Near it the weak are strengthened, the wounded soldiers, even those of rank and celebrity, who fall in the battle, are carried to it, and it is called the

To Thebes-ward, and al his oost bysyde;
No ner Athenes wolde he go ne ryde,
Ne take his eese fully half a day,
But onward on his waye that nyght he lay;
And sente anoon Ypolita the queene,
And Emelye hir yonge suster schene,
Unto the toun of Athenes to dwelle;
And forth he ryt; ther is no more to telle.
The reede statue of Mars with spere and targe
So schyneth in his white baner large,
That alle the feeldes[1] glitern up and doun;
And by his baner was born his pynoun
Of gold ful riche, in which ther was i-bete
The Minatour which that he slough in Crete.
Thus ryt this duk, thus ryt this conquerour,
And in his oost of chevalrie the flour,
Til that he cam to Thebes, and alighte
Fayre in a feeld wher as he thoughte to fighte.
But schortly for to speken of this thing,
With Creon, which that was of Thebes kyng,
He faught, and slough him manly as a knight
In pleyn bataille, and putte his folk to flight;
And by assaut he wan the cité aftur,
And rente doun bothe wal, and sparre, and raftur;
And to the ladies he restored agayn
The bones of here housbondes that were slayn,
To do exequies, as was tho the gyse.
But it wer al to long for to devyse
The grete clamour and the waymentynge
Which that the ladies made at the brennynge

'standard,' from its standing a most compact signal to the army.'—*Itinerary of Richard I. and others to the Holy Land*, by GEOFFREY OF VINSAUF.

[1] The *field* is the heraldic term for the ground upon which the various charges, as they are called, are emblazoned. The banner was large and broad, and upon it was emblazoned the knight's coat of arms. The pennon was small, forked, and usually bore his personal device or crest. The whole of this description is taken from the *Thebais*, lib. xii. The contrast, and at the same time, the similarity between the heroic and the chivalrous ideas is curious.

Of the bodyes, and the grete honour
That Theseus the noble conquerour
Doth to the ladyes, whan they from him wente.
But schortly for to telle is myn entente.
Whan that this worthy duk, this Theseus,
Hath Creon slayn, and Thebes wonne thus,
Stille in the feelde he took al night his reste,
And dide with al the contré as him leste.
To ransake in the cas[1] of bodyes dede
Hem for to streepe of herneys and of wede,
The pilours diden businesse and cure,
After the bataile and discomfiture.
And so byfil, that in the cas thei founde,
Thurgh girt with many a grevous blody wounde,
Two yonge knightes liggyng by and by,
Both in oon[2] armes clad ful richely;
Of whiche two, Arcite hight[3] that oon,
And that othur knight hight Palamon.
Nat fully quyk, ne fully deed they were,
But by here cooté armure, and by here gere,
Heraudes knewe hem wel in special,
As they that weren of the blood real
Of Thebes, and of sistren tuo i-born.
Out of the chaas the pilours han hem torn,
And han hem caried softe unto the tente
Of Theseus, and ful sone he hem sente

---

[1] Instead of *cas* in this line, and *chaas* in the *Knightes Tale*, Speght and Tyrwhitt read *taas*, meaning heap, as in modern French *tás*. Mr. Wright adopts the reading given in the text from the Harl. and other MSS., but does not attempt to explain it; nor indeed does it seem capable of a satisfactory explanation.

[2] Bearing the same coat of arms, which denoted that they belonged to the same house. Even in Homer there are indications of the idea of coat armour, but it was not until much later that particular coats were appropriated to families. This is, therefore, an anachronism, as is indeed the whole poem.

[3] Preterite tense of the verb *to haten*, to be called. Tyrwhitt, in a note upon this word, says, 'It is difficult to determine what part of speech it is.' But it appears evidently to be a verb, of neuter form and passive signification, exactly analogous to the Latin *vapulo*, to be beaten. The modern German is *heissen*, with the same meaning.

Tathenes, for to dwellen in prisoun
Perpetuelly, he wolde no raunceoun.
And this duk whan he hadde thus i-doon,
He took his host, and hom he ryt anoon
With laurer crowned as a conquerour;
And there he lyveth[1] in joye and in honour
Terme of his lyf; what wolle ye wordes moo?
And in a tour, in angwische and in woo,
This Palamon, and his felawe Arcite,
For evermo, ther may no gold hem quyte.
This passeth yeer by yeer, and day by day,
Till it fel oones in a morwe of May
That Emelie, that fairer was to seene
Than is the lilie on hire stalkes grene.
And fresscher than the May with floures newe—
For with the rose colour strof hire hewe,
I not which was the fyner of hem two—
Er it was day, as sche was wont to do,
Sche was arisen, and al redy dight;
For May wole have no sloggardye a night.
The sesoun priketh every gentil herte,
And maketh him out of his sleepe sterte,
And seith, 'Arys, and do thin observance.'
This maked Emelye han remembrance
To do honour to May,[2] and for to ryse.
I-clothed was sche fressh for to devyse.

[1] He lyveth must be read as one foot; another instance of the rule so common in Latin and Greek metres, of considering two short unaccented syllables equivalent to one long.

[2] The return of genial weather in May has invested this month, in the customs of all nations, with something of a festive character.—See Ovid's *Fasti*, lib. v. The Roman Catholic devotion to the blessed Virgin in May, and our own Whitsuntide holidays, are indications of the same feeling. It was, until very lately, the custom in remote places for youths and maidens to go into the fields before sunrise, and bring home in gay procession boughs of trees, with which they decorated the church and their houses. The May-pole is not yet quite abandoned. Stubbs, in the *Anatomie of Abuses*, 1585, p. 94, says—'Against Maie, every parishe, towne, and village, assembled themselves together, bothe men, women, and children, olde and younge, even all indifferently, and either going all together, or devidyng themselves into companies, they goe, some to

Hire yolwe heer was browdid in a tresse,
Byhynde hire bak, a yerde long I gesse.
And in the gardyn at the sonne upriste
Sche walketh up and doun wher as hire liste.
Sche gadereth floures, partye whyte and reede,
To make a sotel[1] gerland for hire heede,
And as an aungel hevenly sche song.
The grete tour, that was so thikke and strong,
Which of the castel was the cheef dongeoun,[2]
(Ther as this knightes weren in prisoun,
Of which I tolde yow, and telle schal)
Was evene joynyng to the gardeyn wal,
Ther as this Emely hadde hire pleyyng.
Bright was the sonne, and cleer that morwenynge,
And Palamon, this woful prisoner,
As was his wone, by leve of his gayler
Was risen,[3] and romed in a chambre on heigh,
In which he al the noble cite seigh,

---

the woodes and groves, some to the hills and mountaines, some to one place, some to another, where they spend all the night in pastimes, and in the morninge they return, bringing with them birche bowes and branches of trees to deck their assemblie withalle.'—See also *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act i., scene 1.

[1] The Harl. MS. reads *certeyn*, which seems unmeaning. Sotel is from Tyrwhitt, and signifies, of course, curiously or subtly braided. The twining of garlands of the young branches and flowers always formed a principal part of the May-day rites. In a ballad called the *Milkmaid's Life*, printed about 1630, we are told,—

'Upon the first of May,
With garlands fresh and gay,
With mirth and music sweet,
For such a season meet,
They passe their time away.'

[2] The *dongeoun*, sometimes called the *donjon keep*, from *keep*, which meant guard. It was the principal guard of the castle, in consequence of its strength. Beneath the keep were the vaults in which prisoners were confined, whence the modern acceptation of the word dungeon.

[3] *Was risen* must be considered as one foot for the sake of the metre, and the final *e* in *chambre* must be elided before the succeeding *on*.

And eek the gardeyn, ful of braunches grene,
Ther as the fresshe Emelye the scheene[1]
Was in hire walk, and romed up and doun.
This sorweful prisoner, this Palamon,
Gooth in the chambre romyng to and fro,
And to himself compleynyng of his woo;
That he was born, ful ofte he seyd, alas!
And so byfel, by aventure or cas,
That thurgh a wyndow thikke and many a barre
Of iren greet and squar as eny sparre,
He cast his eyen upon Emelya,
And therwithal he bleynte and cryed, a!
As that he stongen were unto the herte.
And with that crye Arcite anon up sterte,
And seyde, 'Cosyn myn, what eyleth the,
That art so pale and deedly for to see?
Why crydestow?[2] who hath the doon offence?
For Goddes love, tak al in pacience
Oure prisoun, for it may non othir be;
Fortune hath geven us this adversité.
Som wikke aspect or disposicioun
Of Saturne, by sum constellacioun,
Hath geven us this, although we hadde it sworn;
So stood the heven whan that we were born;
We moste endure it: this is the schort and pleyn.'
This Palamon answered, and seyde ageyn,
'Cosyn, for sothe of this opynyoun
Thou hast a veyn ymaginacioun.
This prisoun caused me not for to crye.
But I was hurt right now thurgh myn yhe

---

[1] In the orthography of the MS. from which the text is derived, *sch*, as in modern German, has the same force as *sh*.

[2] *Crydestow?* for *criedst thou?* So *seistow* for *sayest thou*, *slepistow* for *sleepest thou*. It often happens that the difficulty of understanding old English depends entirely upon the orthography; when a passage therefore appears to be unintelligible, an excellent way, sometimes, of ascertaining the meaning is to read it aloud, and to be guided entirely by the sound, as in reading the *Fonetic Nuz*.

Into myn herte, that wol my bane be.
The fairnesse of the lady that I see
Yonde in the gardyn rome to and fro,
Is cause of my cryying and my wo.
I not whethur sche be womman or goddesse;
But Venus is it, sothly as I gesse.'
And therwithal on knees adoun he fil,
And seyde: 'Venus, if it be youre wil
Yow in this gardyn thus to transfigure,
Biforn me sorwful wrecched creature,
Out of this prisoun help that we may scape.
And if so be oure destine be schape
By eterne word to deyen in prisoun,
Of oure lynage haveth sum compassioun,
That is so lowe y-brought by tyrannye.'
And with that word Arcite gan espye
Wher as this lady romed to and fro.
And with that sight hire beaute hurt him so,
That if that Palamon was wounded sore,
Arcite is hurt as moche as he, or more.
And with a sigh he seyde pitously:
'The freissche beaute sleeth me sodeynly
Of hir that rometh yonder in the place;
And but I have hir mercy and hir grace,
That I may see hir atte leste weye,
I nam but deed; ther nys no more to seye.
This Palamon, whan he tho wordes herde,
Dispitously he loked, and answerde:
'Whether seistow in ernest or in pley?'
'Nay,' quoth Arcite, 'in ernest in good fey.
God helpe me so, me lust ful evele pleye.'
This Palamon gan knytte his browes tweye:
'It nere,' quod he, 'to the no gret honour,
For to be fals, ne for to be traytour
To me, that am thy cosyn and thy brother
I-swore[1] ful deepe, and ech of us to other,

[1] Formal compacts for the purpose of mutual counsel and assist-

That never for to deyen in the payne,[1]
Til that deeth departe schal us twayne,
Neyther of us in love to hynder other,
Ne in non other cas, my leeve brother;
But that thou schuldest trewly forther me
In every caas, and I schal forther the.
This was thyn othe, and myn eek certayn;
I wot right wel, thou darst it nat withsayn.
Thus art thou of my counseil out of doute.
And now thou woldest falsly ben aboute
To love my lady, whom I love and serve,
And evere schal, unto myn herte sterve.
Now certes, fals Arcite, thou schal not so.
I loved hir first, and tolde the my woo
As to my counseil, and to brother sworn
To forther me, as I have told biforn.
For which thou art i-bounden as a knight
To helpe me, if it lay in thi might,
Or elles art thou fals, I dar wel sayn.'
This Arcite ful proudly spak agayn.
'Thou schalt,' quoth he, 'be rather fals than I.
But thou art fals, I telle the uttirly.

---

ance in love and war were common to the heroic and chivalrous ages. Theseus and Peirithous, Achilles and Patroclus, Pylades and Orestes, Nysus and Euryalus, and, in the *Thebais*, Tydeus and Polynices, are instances familiar to every one, in the former period; in the latter, examples may be found in innumerable romances. Authentic history furnishes many similar cases, of which we have an interesting illustration in a book entitled *Ancient Irish Histories*, in which are narrated the adventures of Sir John de Courcy and Sir Armoric de St. Lawrence, Norman knights, and ancestors of the present Lords Kinsale and Howth, to whom Henry II. had granted districts in Ireland, and who, in virtue of a compact of this sort, rendered each other valuable assistance in their continual wars with the wild Irish or kerns.

[1] A translation of a French expression. Froissart, quoted by Tyrwhitt, relates, that Edward III. declared he would not return 'jusques à tant qu'il auroit fin de guerre, ou paix à sa suffisance, ou à son grand honneur; *ou il mourroit en la peine.*'—See also *Romance of the Rose*, 3326.

'All that ye saine is but in vaine,
Me were lever die in the paine.'

For *par amour*[1] I loved hir first then thow.
What wolt thou sayn? thou wost not yit now
Whether sche be a womman or goddesse.
Thyn is affeccioun of holynesse,
And myn is love, as of a creature;
For which I tolde the myn aventure
As to my cosyn, and my brother sworn.
I pose,[2] that thou lovedest hire biforn;
Wost thou nat wel the olde clerkes[3] sawe,
That who schal geve a lover eny lawe,
Love is a grettere lawe, by my pan,[4]
Then may be geve to eny erthly man?
Therfore posityf lawe, and such decre,
Is broke alway for love in ech degree.
A man moot needes love maugre his heed.
He may nought fle it, though he schulde be deed,
Al be sche mayde, or be sche widewe or wyf.
And that it is nat likly al thy lyf
To stonden in hire grace, no more schal I;
For wel thou wost thyselven verrily,
That thou and I been dampned to prisoun
Perpetuelly, us gayneth no raunsoun.
We stryve, as doth the houndes for the boon,
They foughte al day, and yit here part was noon;
Ther com a kyte, whil that they were wrothe,
And bar awey the boon bitwixe hem bothe.
And therfore at the kynges court, my brother,
Eche man for himself, ther is non other.
Love if the list; for I love and ay schal;
And sothly, leeve brother, this is al.

[1] In the way of love. You loved her as a matter of religion, supposing her to be the goddess Venus. The expression to love, *par amour*, was also used in contradistinction to chaste love; hence the modern substantive paramour.

[2] *Je pose*, I put it, that is, I suppose, for the sake of argument.

[3] The 'clerke' is Boethius, and the proverb is taken from his *De Consolatione*, lib. iii. met. 12:—

'Quis legem det amantibus?
Major lex amor est sibi.'

[4] By my pan means brain-pan or skull.

Eke in this prisoun moote we endure,
And every of us take his aventure.'
Gret was the stryf and long bytwixe hem tweye,
If that I hadde leysir for to seye;
But to the effect. It happed on a day,
(To telle it yow as schortly as I may)
A worthy duk that highte Perotheus,
That felaw[1] was to the duk Theseus
Syn thilke day that they were children lyte,
Was come to Athenes, his felawe to visite,
And for to pley, as he was wont to do,
For in this world he loved noman so:
And he loved him as tendurly agayn.
So wel they loved, as olde bookes sayn,
That whan that oon was deed, sothly to telle,
His felawe went and sought him doun in helle;[2]
But of that story lyst me nought to write.
Duk Perotheus loved wel Arcite,
And hadde him knowe at Thebes yeer by yeer;
And fynally at requeste and prayer
Of Perotheus, withoute any raunsoun
Duk Theseus him leet out of prisoun,
Frely to go, wher him lust over al,
In such a gyse, as I you telle schal.
This was the forward, playnly to endite,
Betwixe Theseus and him Arcite:
That if so were, that Arcite were founde
Evere in his lyf, by daye or night, o stound
In eny contre of this Theseus,
And he were caught, it was acorded thus,

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[1] Brother in arms. See *ante* p. 124, note 1. 'Theseus did not only release him (Peirithous) of all the damage he had done, but requested him he would become his friend and brother in arms. Hereupon they were presently sworn brothers in the field.'—PLUTARCH, *Lives*, translated by Sir Thomas North, Knight, 1631.

[2] An allusion to Theseus accompanying Peirithous in his expedition to carry off Proserpina, daughter of Aidoneus, king of the Molossians, when both were taken prisoners, and Peirithous torn in pieces by the dog Cerberus.—PLUTARCH, *Theseus*.

That with a swerd he scholde lese his heed;
Ther nas noon other remedy ne reed,
But took his leeve, and homward he him spedde;
Let him be war, his nekke lith to wedde.[1]
How gret a sorwe suffreth now Arcite!
The deth he feleth thorugh his herte smyte;
He weepeth, weyleth, cryeth pitously;
To slen himself he wayteth pryvyly.
He seyde, 'Allas the day that I was born!
Now is my prisoun werse than was biforne;
Now is me schape eternally to dwelle
Nought in purgatorie, but in helle.[2]
Allas! that ever knewe I Perotheus!
For elles had I dweld with Theseus
I-fetered in his prisoun for evere moo.
Than had I ben in blis, and nat in woo.
Oonly the sight of hir, whom that I serve,
Though that I hir grace may nat deserve,
Wold han sufficed right ynough for me.
O dere cosyn Palamon,' quod he,
'Thyn is the victoire of this aventure,
Ful blisfully in prisoun to endure;
In prisoun? nay, certes but in paradys!
Wel hath fortune y-torned the the dys,
That hath the sight of hir, and I the absence.
For possible is, syn thou hast hir presence,
And art a knight, a worthi and an able,
That by som cas, syn fortune is chaungable,
Thou maist to thy desir somtyme atteyne.
But I that am exiled, and bareyne
Of alle grace, and in so gret despeir,
That ther nys water, erthe, fyr, ne eyr,
Ne creature, that of hem maked is,
That may me helpe ne comfort in this.
Wel ought I sterve in wanhope and distresse;
Farwel my lyf and al my jolynesse.

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[1] Lies in pledge. *Wad* is still used provincially in this sense
[2] In purgatory there is hope of redemption; not so in hell.

Allas, why playnen folk so in comune
Of purveance of God, or of fortune,
That geveth hem ful ofte in many a gyse
Wel better than thei can hemself devyse?
Som man desireth for to have richesse,
That cause is of his morthre or gret seeknesse.
And som man wolde out of his prisoun fayn,
That in his hous is of his mayne slayn.
Infinite harmes ben in this mateere;
We wote nevere what thing we prayen heere.
We faren as he that dronke is as a mows.
A dronke man wot wel he hath an hous,[1]
But he not nat which the righte wey is thider,
And to a dronke man the wey is slider,
And certes in this world so faren we.
We seeken faste after felicite,
But we gon wrong ful ofte trewely.
Thus may we seyen alle, namely I,
That wende have had a gret opinioun,
That gif I mighte skape fro prisoun,
Than had I be in joye and parfyt hele,
Ther now I am exiled fro my wele.
Syn that I may not se yow, Emelye,
I nam but deed; ther nys no remedye.'
Uppon that other syde Palamon,
Whan he wiste that Arcite was agoon,
Such sorwe maketh, that the grete tour
Resowneth of his yollyng and clamour.
The pure[2] feteres of his schynes grete
Weren of his bitter salte teres wete.
'Allas!' quod he, 'Arcita, cosyn myn,
Of al oure strif, God woot, the fruyt is thin.

---

[1] This is also from Boethius, *De Consolatione*, lib. iii., thus translated by Chaucer. 'But I returne again to the studies of men, of which men the corage alway reherseth and seeketh the soverayne good, al be it so that it be with a dyrked memory; but he not by which pathe, *right as a dronken man note nought by which pathe he may returne home to his house.*'

[2] The very fetters. So in the *Duchess*, v. 583, the pure deth. And in Pierce's *Plowman's Creede*, 'of a *pure* pore man.'

Thow walkest now in Thebes at thi large,
And of my woo thou gevest litel charge.
Thou maiste, syn thou hast wysdom and manhede,
Assemble al the folk of oure kynrede,
And make a werre so scharpe in this cité,
That by som aventure, or by som treté,
Thou mayst hire wynne to lady and to wyf,
For whom that I most needes leese my lyf.
For as by wey of possibilité,
Syn thou art at thi large of prisoun free,
And art a lord, gret is thin avantage,
More than is myn, that sterve here in a kage.
For I moot weepe and weyle, whil I lyve,
With al the woo that prisoun may me gyve,
And eek with peyne that love me geveth also,
That doubleth al my torment and my wo.'
Therwith the fuyr of jelousye upsterte
Withinne his brest, and hent him by the herte
So wadly, that lik was he to byholde
The box-tree, or the asschen deed and colde.
Tho seyde he; 'O goddes cruel, that governe
This world with byndyng of youre word eterne,
And writen in the table of athamaunte
Youre parlement and youre eterne graunte,
What is mankynde more to yow holde
Than is a scheep, that rouketh in the folde?
For slayn is man right as another beste,
And dwelleth eek in prisoun and arreste,
And hath seknesse, and greet adversité,
And ofte tymes gilteles, pardé.
What governaunce is in youre prescience,
That gilteles tormenteth innocence?
And yet encreceth this al my penaunce,
That man is bounden to his observaunce
For Goddes sake to letten of his wille,
Ther as a beste may al his lust fulfille.
And whan a beste is deed, he ne hath no peyne;
But man after his deth moot wepe and pleyne,

Though in this world he have care and woo:
Withouten doute it may stonde so.
The answer of this I lete to divinis,
But well I woot, that in this world gret pyne is.
Allas! I se a serpent or a theef,
That many a trewe man hath doon mescheef,
Gon at his large, and wher him lust may turne.
But I moste be in prisoun thurgh Saturne,
And eek thorugh Juno, jalous[1] and eke wood,
That hath destruyed wel neyh al the blood
Of Thebes, with his waste walles wyde.
And Venus sleeth me on that other syde
For jelousye, and fere of him Arcyte.'
Now wol I stynte of Palamon a lite,
And lete him stille in his prisoun dwelle,
And of Arcita forth than wol I telle.
The somer passeth, and the nightes longe
Encrescen double wise the peynes stronge
Bothe of the lover and the prisoner.
I noot which hath the wofullere cheer.
For schortly for to sey, this Palamon
Perpetuelly is dampned to prisoun,
In cheynes and in feteres to be deed;
And Arcite is exiled upon his heed
For evere mo as out of that contré,
Ne nevere mo he schal his lady see.
Now lovyeres axe I this question,[2]
Who hath the worse, Arcite or Palamon?
That on may se his lady day by day,
But in prisoun he moot dwelle alway.
That other may wher him lust ryde or go,
But seen his lady schal he never mo.

---

[1] Jealous, because of Jupiter's love of Semele, daughter of Cadmus, founder of Thebes, and of the devotion of the Thebans to Bacchus, the fruit of the amour.

[2] Mr. Wright, in a note upon the place, says, that this is an allusion to the mediæval Courts of Love, in which such questions were seriously discussed.

Now deemeth as you luste, ye that can,
For I wol telle forth as I bigan.
Whan that Arcite to Thebes come was,
Ful ofte a day he swelde and seyde alas,
For seen his lady schal he never mo.
And schortly to concluden all his wo,
So moche sorwe had never creature,
That is or schal whil that the world wol dure.
His sleep, his mete, his drynk is him byraft,
That lene he wexe, and drye as eny schaft.
His eyen holwe, grisly to biholde;
His hewe falwe, and pale as asschen colde,
And solitary he was, and ever alone,
And dwellyng all the night, making his moone.
And if he herde song or instrument,
Then wolde he wepe, he mighte nought be stent;
So feble were his spirites, and so lowe.
And chaunged so, that no man couthe knowe
His speche nother his vois, though men it herde.
And in his gir,[1] for all the world he ferde
Nought oonly lyke the lovers maladye
Of Hercos,[2] but rather lik manye,
Engendrud of humour melencolyk,
Byforne in his selle fantastyk.[3]

---

[1] In his manner he appeared not like an ordinary lover, but like a madman, whose brain is disordered by bile.

[2] 'Whereas some copies have *Hercos*, some *Hermes*, and some such like counterfeit word, whereof can be given no reason, I have set down *Eros*, i. e., Cupid, as most agreeing, in my opinion, with the matter, which I gather thus. Lucian, in his second dialogue, bringeth in Cupid teaching Jupiter how to become amiable, and in him how lovers may become acceptable to their ladies; not by weeping, watching, and fasting, nor by furious melancolicke fits, but by comely behaviour.'—S. It is thus rendered by Dryden:—

'Unlike the trim of love and gay desire;
But full of museful mopings, which presage
The loss of reason, and conclude in rage.'

[3] In the forehead, where is situated the cell of the brain in which the fancy resides. So it appears that Dr. Spurzheim may appeal, in support of his 'science of phrenology,' to the natural philosophy of the Middle Ages.

And schortly turned was al up-so-doun
Bothe abyt and eek disposicioun
Of him, this woful lovere daun Arcite.
What schulde I alway of his wo endite?
Whan he endured hadde a yeer or tuoo
This cruel torment, and this peyne and woo,
At Thebes, in his contre, as I seyde,
Upon a night in sleep as he him leyde,
Him thought that how the wenged god Mercurie
Byforn him stood, and bad him be murye.
His slepy yerd[1] in hond he bar upright;
An hat he wered upon his heres bright.
Arrayed was this god (as he took keepe)
As he was whan that Argous[2] took his sleep;
And seyde him thus: 'To Athenes schalt thou wende;
Ther is the schapen of thy wo an ende.'[3]
And with that word Arcite wook and sterte.
'Now trewely how sore that me smerte.'
Quod he, 'to Athenes right now wol I fare;
Ne for the drede of deth schal I not spare
To see my lady, that I love and serve;
In hire presence I recche nat to sterve.'
And with that word he caught a gret myrour,
And saugh that chaunged was al his colour,
And saugh his visage was in another kynde.
And right anoon it ran him into mynde.
That seththen his face was so disfigured
Of maladie the which he hath endured,
He mighte wel, if that he bar him lowe,
Lyve in Athenes evere more unknowe,
And see his lady wel neih day by day.
And right anon he chaunged his aray,
And clothed him as a pore laborer.
And al alone, save oonly a squyer,

---

[1] The Caduceus.
[2] See Ovid's *Metamorph.*, lib. i., line 714.
[3] Where an end of thy woe is shaped, or contrived, for thee.

That knew his pryvyte and al his cas,
Which was disgysed povrely as he was,
To Athenes is he go the nexte way.
And to the court he went upon a day,
And at the gate he profred his servyse,
To drugge and drawe, what so men wolde devyse.
And schortly of this matier for to seyn,
He fel in office with a chambirleyn,
The which that dwellyng was with Emelye.
For he was wys, and couthe sone aspye[1]
Of every servaunt, which that served here.
Wel couthe he hewe woode, and water bere,
For he was yonge and mighty for the nones,
And therto he was strong and bygge of bones
To doon that eny wight can him devyse.
A yeer or two he was in this servise,
Page of the chambre of Emelye the bright;
And Philostrate[2] he seide that he hight.
But half so wel beloved a man as he
Ne was ther never in court of his degree.
He was so gentil of his condicioun,
That thorughout al the court was his renoun.
They seyde that it were a charité
That Theseus would enhaunsen his degree,
And putten him in worschipful servyse,
Ther as he might his vertu excersise.
And thus within a while his name spronge[3]
Bothe of his dedes, and of goode tonge,
That Theseus hath taken him so neer
That of his chambre he made him squyer,

[1] This appears to mean—he knew how to watch, or espy, opportunities of recommending himself to his master, sooner than any servant in the family.

[2] Tyrwhitt says, that in the *Theseida*, Arcite assumes the name of *Penthæo*, and conjectures that the name of Philostrate was suggested by Boccaccio's poem, entitled *Philistrato*, or by one of the characters in the *Decameron*. In the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, a Philostrate is also introduced as a favourite servant of Theseus.

[3] His good name began to spring up; a beautiful metaphor from the growth of plants.

And gaf him gold to mayntene his degree;
And eek men brought him out of his countré
Fro yeer to yer ful pryvyly his rente;
But honestly and sleighly he it spente,
That no man wondred how that he it hadde.
And thre yeer in this wise his lyf he ladde,
And bar him so in pees and eek in werre,
Ther nas no man that Theseus hath so derre.
And in this blisse lete I now Arcite,
And speke I wole of Palamon a lyte.
In derknes orrible and strong prisoun
This seven yeer hath seten Palamon,
Forpyned, what for woo and for destresse.
Who feleth double sorwe and hevynesse
But Palamon? that love destreyneth so,
That wood out of his witt he goth for wo;
And eek therto he is a prisoner
Perpetuelly, nat oonly for a yeer.
Who couthe ryme in Englissch propurly
His martirdam? for sothe it am nat I;
Therfore I passe as lightly as I may.
It fel that in the seventhe yeer in May
The thridde night, (as olde bookes seyn,
That al this storie tellen more pleyn)
Were it by aventure or destené,
(As, whan a thing is schapen, it schal be,)
That soone aftur the mydnyght, Palamon
By helpyng of a freend brak his prisoun,
And fleeth the cite fast as he may goo,
For he hath give drinke his gayler soo
Of a clarre,[1] maad of a certayn wyn,
With nercotykes and opye of Thebes fyn,
That al that night though that men wolde him schake,
The gayler sleep, he mighte nought awake.

[1] Spiced wine, given to guests the last thing before going to bed, to promote sleep. The red wine of Bordeaux, being generally used for this purpose, at length obtained exclusive possession of the name of *claret*.

And thus he fleeth as fast as ever he may.
The night was schort, and faste by the day,
That needes cost[1] he moste himselven hyde,
And til a grove ther faste besyde
With dredful foot than stalketh Palamon.
For schortly this was his opynyoun,
That in that grove he wolde him hyde al day,
And in the night then wolde he take his way
To Thebes-ward, his frendes for to preye
On Theseus to helpe him to werreye.
And schortelich, or he wolde lese his lyf,
Or wynnen Emelye unto his wyf.
This is theffect of his entente playn.
Now wol I torne unto Arcite agayn,
That litel wiste how nyh that was his care,
Til that fortune hath brought him in the snare.

The busy larke, messager of daye,
Salueth in hire song the morwe gray;
And fyry Phebus ryseth up so bright,
That all the orient laugheth of the light,
And with his stremes dryeth in the greves
The silver dropes, hongyng on the leeves.
And Arcite, that is in the court ryal
With Theseus, his squyer principal,
Is risen, and loketh on the mery day.
And for to doon his observance to May,[2]
Remembryng of the poynt of his desire,
He on his courser, stertyng as the fire,
Is riden into feeldes him to pleye,
Out of the court, were it a myle or tweye.
And to the grove, of which that I yow tolde,
By aventure his wey he gan to holde,
To make him a garland of the greves,
Were it of woodewynde or hawthorn leves,

---

[1] Apparently a proverbial expression of the same signification as *needs must*. It occurs in the *Leg. of Gode Women*:—

'Or, needes coste, this thing mote have an end.'

[2] See *ante*, p. 121, note 2.

And lowde he song agens the sonne scheene:
'May, with all thyn floures and thy greene,
Welcome be thou, wel faire freissche May,
I hope that I som grene gete may.'[1]
And fro his courser, with a lusty herte,
Into the grove ful lustily he sterte,
And in a pathe he romed up and doun,
Ther by aventure this Palamoun
Was in a busche, that no man might him see.
Ful sore afered of his deth was he,
Nothing ne knew he that it was Arcite:
God wot he wolde have trowed it ful lite.
For soth is seyde, goon ful many yeres,
That feld hath eyen, and the woode hath eeres.[2]
It is ful fair a man to bere him evene,
For al day meteth men atte unset stevene.[3]
Ful litel woot Arcite of his felawe,
That was so neih to herken of his sawe,
For in the busche he stynteth now ful stille.
Whan that Arcite had romed al his fille,
And songen al the roundel lustily,
Into a studie he fel sodeynly,
As doth thes lovers in here queynte geeres,
Now in the croppe, now doun in the breres,[4]
Now up, now doun, as boket in a welle.
Right as the Friday, sothly for to telle,
Now it schyneth, now it reyneth faste,
Right so gan gery Venus overcaste
The hertes of hire folk; right as hir day[5]
Is gerful, right so chaungeth hire aray.

[1] This is a singularly bald conclusion to his song, for which, and for the two following lines, the only excuse is Horace's 'Bonus dormitat Homerus.'

[2] A proverbial expression, rendered into mediæval Latin. 'Campus habet lumen, et habet nemus auris acumen.'

[3] It is right that men bear themselves warily at all times, for it happens every day that they meet when they least expect it, without making an appointment.

[4] *Now in the croppe*, now at the top of the wood, in high spirits; *now in the breres*, now low on the ground among the briars, depressed.

[5] Friday, sacred to the Saxon goddess Friga, corresponding to the

Selde is the Fryday al the wyke i-like.
Whan that Arcite hadde songe, he gan to sike,
And sette him doun withouten eny more:
'Alas!' quod he, 'that day that I was bore!
How longe Juno,[1] thurgh thy cruelté
Wiltow werreyen Thebes the citee?
Allas! i-brought is to confusioun
The blood royal of Cadme and Amphioun;
Of Cadynus, the which was the furst man
That Thebes bulde, or first the toun bygan,
And of that cite first was crowned kyng,
Of his lynage am I, and his ofspring
By verray lyne, and of his stok ryal:
And now I am so caytyf and so thral,
That he that is my mortal enemy,
I serve him as his squyer povrely.
And yet doth Juno me wel more schame,
For I dar nought byknowe myn owne name,
But ther as I was wont to hote Arcite,
Now hoote I Philostrate, nought worth a myte.
Allas! thou felle Mars, allas! Juno,
Thus hath youre ire owre lynage fordo,
Save oonly me, and wrecchid Palamon,
That Theseus martyreth in prisoun.
And over all this, to slee me utterly,
Love hath his fyry dart so brennyngly
I-stykid thorugh my trewe careful herte,
That schapen was my deth erst than my scherte.[2]

---

classical Aphrodite or Venus. The superstitious opinion that Friday is unlucky appears to have had a Christian origin, being the day on which the Redeemer was crucified. The proverb, 'Friday's moon, come when it will, it comes too soon,' is an instance of this feeling. In the next line *gerful*, meaning changeable, which is the reading of the two Cambridge MSS., has been adopted, instead of *grisful*.

[1] See *ante*, p. 131, note 1.

[2] My death was doomed from the moment I was born, even before I was clothed. Tyrwhitt says, it seems to mean the linen in which a new-born babe is wrapped. Compare *Leg. of Gode Women*, 2618:—

'Sens first that day that shapen was my sherte,
Or by the fatal suster had my dome.'

Ye slen me with youre eyhen, Emelye;
Ye ben the cause wherfore that I dye.
Of al the remenant of al myn other care
Ne sette I nought the mountaunce of a tare,
So that I couthe do ought to youre plesaunce.'
And with that word he fel doun in a traunce
A longe tyme; and aftirward upsterte
This Palamon, that thoughte thurgh his herte
He felt a cold swerd sodeynliche glyde;
For ire he quook, he nolde no lenger abyde.
And whan that he hath herd Arcites tale,
As he were wood, with face deed and pale,
He sterte him up out of the bussches thikke,
And seyd: 'Arcyte, false traitour wikke,
Now art thou hent, that lovest my lady so,
For whom that I have al this peyne and wo,
And art my blood, and to my counseil sworn,
As I ful ofte have told the heere byforn,
And hast byjaped here the duke Theseus,
And falsly chaunged hast thy name thus;
I wol be deed, or elles thou schalt dye.
Thou schalt not love my lady Emelye,
But I wil love hire oonly and no mo;
For I am Palamon thy mortal fo.
And though that I no wepen have in this place,
But out of prisoun am y-stert by grace,
I drede not that other thou schalt dye,
Or thou ne schalt not love Emelye.
Chese which thou wilt, for thou schalt not asterte.'
This Arcite, with ful despitous herte,
Whan he him knew, and had his tale herde,
As fers as a lyoun pulleth out a swerde,
And seide thus: 'By God that sitteth above,
Nere it that thou art sike and wood for love,
And eek that thou no wepne hast in this place,
Thou schuldest never out of this grove pace,[1]

[1] The Harl. MS. reads, *But out of prison art y-stert by grace*, which probably arose from a mistake of the scribe, who, seeing that the pre-

That thou ne schuldest deyen of myn hond.
For I defye the seurte and the bond
Which that thou seyst I have maad to the.
For, verray fool, thenk that love is fre;
And I wol love hire mawgre al thy might.
But, for thou art a gentil perfight knight,
And wenest to dereyne hire by batayle,
Have heere my trouthe, to morwe I nyl not fayle,
Withouten witynge of eny other wight,
That heer I wol be founden as a knight,
And bryngen harneys right inough for the;
And ches the best, and lef the worst for me.
And mete and drynke this night wil I bryng
Inough for the, and cloth for thy beddyng.
And if so be that thou my lady wynne,
And sle me in this wood that I am inne,
Thou maist wel have thy lady as for me.'
This Palamon answereth, 'I graunt it the.'
And thus they ben departed til a-morwe,
Whan ech of hem had leyd his feith to borwe.
O Cupide, out of al charité!
O regne, that wolt no felaw have with the!
Ful soth is seyde, that love ne lordschipe
Wol not, his thonkes,[1] have no felaschipe.
Wel fynden that Arcite and Palamoun.
Arcite is riden anon to the toun,
And on the morwe, or it were day light,
Ful prively two harneys hath he dight,
Bothe sufficaunt and mete to darreyne
The batayl in the feeld betwix hem tweyne.
And on his hors, alone as he was born,
He caryed al this harneys him byforn;
And in the grove, at tyme and place i-sette,
This Arcite and this Palamon ben mette.

---

vious line was a repetition of one that had occurred just before, thought that the next line was to be repeated also.—W.

[1] With his good will. In other passages, *hir thankes*; with their good will. So, observes Tyrwhitt, in the *Stat. Chron.* p. 243:—'Sume *here thankes*, and sume *here unthankes*; aliqui *libenter*, et aliqui *ingratis*.'

Tho chaungen gan here colour in here face.
Right as the honter in the regne of Trace[1]
That stondeth in the gappe with a spere,
Whan honted is the lyoun or the bere,
And hereth him come russhyng in the greves,
And breketh bothe the bowes and the leves,
And thenketh, 'Here cometh my mortel enemy,
Withoute faile, he mot be deed or I;
For eyther I mot slen him at the gappe,
Or he moot slee me, if it me myshappe:'
So ferden they, in chaungyng of here hew,
As fer as eyther of hem other knewe.
Ther nas no good day, ne no saluyng;
But streyt withouten wordes rehersyng,
Every of hem helpeth to armen other,
As frendly as he were his owen brother;
And thanne with here scharpe speres stronge
They foyneden ech at other wonder longe.
Tho it semed that this Palamon
In his fightyng were as a wood lyoun,
And as a cruel tygre was Arcite:
As wilde boores gonne they togeder smyte,
That frothen white as fome for ire wood.
Up to the ancle they faught in here blood.
And in this wise I lete hem fightyng welle;
And forthere I wol of Theseus telle.
The destine, mynistre general,
That executeth in the world over al
The purveans, that God hath seye byforn;
So strong it is, that they[2] the world had sworn

---

[1] This fine simile appears to have been taken from the *Thebais*, lib. iv., 494. The passage is given, that the reader may see how Chaucer has excelled the Latin poet:—

'Qualis Gætulæ stabulantem ad confraga sylvæ
Venator longo motum clamore leonem
Expectat, firmans animum, et sudantia nisu
Tela premens. Gelat ora pavor, gressusque tremiscunt,
Quis veniat, quantusque; sed horrida signa prementis
Accipit, et cæcâ metitur murmura curâ.'

[2] *They* is written for though. Sir Harris Nicolas cites this passage

The contrary of a thing by ye or nay,
Yet som tyme it schal falle upon a day
That falleth nought eft in a thousend yeere.
For certeynly oure appetites heere,
Be it of werre, of pees, other hate, or love,
Al is it reuled by the sight above.
This mene I now by mighty Theseus,
That for to honte is so desirous,
And namely the grete hert in May,
That in his bed ther daweth him no day,
That he nys clad, and redy for to ryde
With hont and horn, and houndes him byside.
For in his hontyng hath he such delyt,
That is his joye and his appetyt
To been himself the grete herts bane,
For after Mars he serveth now Diane.
Cleer was the day, as I have told or this,
And Theseus, with alle joye and blys,
With his Ypolita, the fayre queene,
And Emelye, clothed al in greene,
On honting be they riden ryally.
And to the grove, that stood ther faste by,
In which ther was an hert as men him tolde,
Duk Theseus the streyte wey hath holde.
And to the launde he rydeth him ful right,
There was the hert y-wont to have his flight,
And over a brook, and so forth in his weye.
This duk wol have of him a cours or tweye
With houndes, which as him lust to comaunde.
And whan this duk was come into the launde,
Under the sonne he loketh,[1] right anon
He was war of Arcite and Palamon,

---

as a proof of Chaucer's belief in predestination, meaning, apparently, the doctrine of absolute decrees. It proves his belief in God's providential government of the world, which is a very different thing.

[1] This passage is an example of Chaucer's power of description. We think we must have actually witnessed the scene. Theseus rides into the forest glade, or lawn, in which Palamon and Arcite are fighting; then, seeing and hearing something unusual, but indistinctly, from the

That foughten breeme, as it were boores tuo;
The brighte swerdes wente to and fro
So hidously, that with the leste strook
It seemeth as it wolde felle an ook;
But what they were, nothing yit he woot.
This duk with spores his courser he smoot,
And at a stert he was betwixt hem tuoo,
And pullid out a swerd and cride, 'Hoo![1]
Nomore, up peyne of leesyng of your heed.
By mighty Mars, anon he schal be deed,
That smyteth eny strook, that I may seen
But telleth me what mestir men ye been,
That ben so hardy for to fighten heere
Withoute jugge or other officere,[2]
As it were in a lyste really?'
This Palamon answerde hastily?
And seyde: 'Sire, what nedeth wordes mo?
We han the deth deserved bothe tuo.
Tuo woful wrecches been we, and kaytyves,
That ben encombred of oure owne lyves;
And as thou art a rightful lord and juge,
Ne geve us neyther mercy ne refuge.
And sle me first, for seynte charité;
But sle my felaw eek as wel as me.
Or sle him first; for, though thou knowe him lyte,
This is thy mortal fo, this is Arcite,
That fro thy lond is banyscht on his heed,
For which he hath i-served[3] to be deed.

glare of the sun, he shades his eyes with his hand, and, becoming aware of the state of the case, he puts spurs to his horse, and dashes in between the combatants.

[1] The exclamation used by the heralds to stop the fight.—See *post*, p. 170, note 1.

[2] The trial by battle, being a legal mode of settling a dispute between gentlemen, and to be conducted by a proper judge and officer, it was, of course, considered an offence and high contempt of the laws to fight without observing these formalities.

[3] For *i-served*, Speght and Tyrwhitt read deserved. The sense is the same in both cases.

For this is he that come to thi gate
And seyde, that he highte Philostrate.
Thus hath he japed the many a yer,
And thou hast maad of him thy cheef squyer.
And this is he that loveth Emelye.
For sith the day is come that I schal dye,
I make pleynly my confessioun,
That I am the woful Palamoun,
That hath thy prisoun broke wikkedly.
I am thy mortal foo, and it am I
That loveth so hoote Emely the bright,
That I wol dye present in hire sight.
Therfore I aske deeth and my juwyse;
But slee my felaw in the same wyse,
For bothe we have served to be slayn.'
This worthy duk answerde anon agayn,
And seide, 'This is a schort conclusioun:
Your owne mouth, by your owne confessioun,
Hath dampned you bothe, and I wil it recorde.
It nedeth nought to pyne yow with the corde.
Ye schul be deed by mighty Mars the reede![1]
The queen anon for verray wommanhede
Gan for to wepe, and so dede Emelye,
And alle the ladies in the companye.
Gret pite was it, as it thought hem alle,
That evere such a chaunce schulde falle;
For gentil men thi were and of gret estate,
And nothing but for love was this debate.
And saw here bloody woundes wyde and sore;
And alle they cryde lesse and the more,
'Have mercy, Lord, upon us wommen alle!'
And on here bare knees anoon they falle,
And wolde have kissed his feet right as he stood,
Til atte laste aslaked was his mood;

[1] Mars is called red from the colour of blood, in which he is supposed to delight. The planet remarkable for its redness was called Mars on account of its colour.

For pite renneth sone in gentil herte.
And though he first for ire quok and sterte,
He hath it al considered in a clause,
The trespas of hem bothe, and here cause:
And although his ire here gylt accused,
Yet in his resoun he hem bothe excused;
And thus he thought that every maner man
Wol help himself in love if that he can,
And eek delyver himself out of prisoun.
And eek in his hert had compassioun
Of wommen, for they wepen ever in oon;
And in his gentil hert he thought anoon,
And sothly he to himself seyde: 'Fy
Upon a lord that wol have no mercy,
But be a lyoun bothe in word and dede,
To hem that ben in repentaunce and drede,
As wel as to a proud dispitious man,
That wol maynteyne that he first bigan.
That lord hath litel of discrecioun,
That in such caas can no divisioun;
But wayeth pride and humblenesse after oon.
And schortly, whan his ire is over gon,
He gan to loke on hem with eyen light,[1]
And spak these same wordes al in hight.
'The god of love, a! *benedicite*,[2]
How mighty and how gret a lord is he!
Agayne his might ther gayneth non obstacle,
He may be cleped a god of his miracle;
For he can maken at his owen gyse
Of ever herte, as him lust devyse.
Lo her is Arcite and Palamon,
That quytely were out of my prisoun,
And might have lyved in Thebes ryally,
And witen I am here mortal enemy,

[1] Cheerful looks.

[2] *Benedicite* is the first word of the *Song of the Three Children* in the old offices said at Lauds, and in the book of Common Prayer at morning service, and is commonly used to express admiration.

And that here deth lith in my might also,
And yet hath love, maugre here eyghen tuo,
I-brought hem hider bothe for to dye.
Now loketh, is nat that an heih folye?
Who may not be a fole, if that he love?
Byholde for Goddes sake that sitteth above,
Se how they blede! be they nought wel arrayed?
Thus hath here lord, the god of love, hem payed
Here wages and here fees for here servise.
And yet wenen they to ben ful wise,
That serven love, for ought that may bifalle.
But this is yette the beste game of alle,
That sche, for whom they have this jelousye,
Can hem therfore as moche thank as me.[1]
Sche woot no more of al this hoote fare,
By God, than wot a cuckoo or an hare.
But all moot ben assayed hoot or colde;
A man moot ben a fool other yong or olde;
I woot it by myself ful yore agon:
For in my tyme a servant was I on.
And sythen that I knewe of loves peyne,
And wot how sore it can a man destreyne,
As he that hath often ben caught in his lace,
I you forgeve holly this trespace,
At the request of the queen that kneleth heere,
And eek of Emely, my suster deere.
And ye schullen bothe anon unto me swere,
That never ye schullen my corowne dere,[2]
Ne make werre on me night ne day,
But be my freendes in alle that ye may.
I you forgeve this trespas every dele.'
And they him swore his axyng fayre and wele,

---

[1] *Can* means literally *knows*; here it means to acknowledge an obligation. In the *Theseida*, Emilia is made to see the lovers when they are first enamoured of her in the garden. Chaucer's plan is an improvement, were it only because it gives him an opportunity of putting this witty speech in the mouth of Theseus.

[2] *Dere* means literally *to injure*, or *to harm*. The meaning of the expression here is, to undertake any enterprise against my royal authority.

And him of lordschip and of mercy prayde,
And he hem graunted mercy, and thus he sayde:
'To speke of real lynage and riches,
Though that sche were a queen or a prynces,
Ilk of yow bothe is worthy douteles
To wedde when tyme is, but natheles
I speke as for my suster Emelye,
For whom ye have this stryf and jelousye,
Ye woot youreself sche may not wedde two
At oones, though ye faughten ever mo:
That oon of yow, or be him loth or leef,
He may go pypen in an ivy leef;[1]
This is to say, sche may nought have bothe,
Al be ye never so jelous, ne so lothe.
For-thy I put you bothe in this degre,
That ilk of you schall have his destyne,[2]
As him is schape, and herken in what wyse;
Lo here your ende of that I schal devyse.
My wil is this, for playn conclusioun,
Withouten eny repplicacioun,
If that you liketh, tak it for the best,
That every of you schal go wher him lest
Frely withouten raunsoun or daungeer;
And this day fyfty wykes, fer ne neer,
Everich of you schal bryng an hundred knightes,
Armed for lystes up at alle rightes
Al redy to derayne hir by batayle.
And thus byhote I you withouten fayle
Upon my trouthe, and as I am a knight,
That whethir of yow bothe that hath might,

---

[1] This appears to be a proverbial expression, like 'he may go blow in a horn,' meaning he may console himself with any frivolous amusement he pleases. It occurs in the *Destruction of Thebes*, Part II., by Lydgate:—

'But let his brother blowe in an horn,
Where that him list, or pipe in a reede.'

To pipe in an ivy leaf meant, possibly, that he might go and do anything silly he liked.

[2] In the trial by battle, which was supposed to be an appeal to the judgment of God.

This is to seyn, that whethir he or thou
May with his hundred, as I spak of now,
Sle his contrary, or out of lystes dryve,
Him schal I geve Emelye to wyve,
To whom that fortune geveth so fair a grace.
The lyste schal I make in this place,
And God so wisly on my sowle rewe,
As I schal even juge ben and trewe.
Ye schul non othir ende with me make,
That oon of yow schal be deed or take.
And if you thinketh this is wel i-sayde,
Say youre avys, and holdeth yow apayde.
This is youre ende and youre conclusioun.'
Who loketh lightly now but Palamoun?
Who spryngeth up for joye but Arcite?
Who couthe tell, or who couthe endite,
The joye that is made in this place
Whan Theseus hath don so fair a grace?
But down on knees wente every wight,
And thanked him with al here hertes miht,
And namely the Thebanes ofte sithe.
And thus with good hope and herte blithe
They taken here leve, and hom-ward they ryde
To Thebes-ward, with olde walles wyde.
I trow men wolde it deme necligence,
If I forgete to telle the dispence
Of Theseus, that goth so busily
To maken up the lystes rially.
And such a noble theatre as it was,
I dar wel say that in this world ther nas.
The circuite ther was a myle aboute,
Walled of stoon, and dyched al withoute.
Round was the schap, in maner of compaas,
Ful of degre,[1] the height of sixty paas,
That whan a man was set in o degre
He letted nought his felaw for to se.

[1] Seats placed one above another, in the manner of steps or degrees, as in an amphitheatre.

Est-ward ther stood a gate of marbul whit,
West-ward such another in opposit.
And schortly to conclude, such a place
Was non in erthe in so litel space.
In al the lond ther nas no craftys man,
That geometry or arsmetrike can,
Ne portreyour, ne kerver of ymages,
That Theseus ne gaf hem mete and wages
The theatré for to maken and devyse.
And for to don his right and sacrifise,[1]
He est-ward hath upon the gate above,
In worschip of Venus, goddes of love,
Don make an auter and an oratory;
And west-ward in the mynde and in memory
Of Mars, he hath i-maked such another,
That coste largely of gold a fother.
And north-ward, in a toret on the walle,
Of alabaster whit and reed coralle
An oratory riche for to see,
In worschip of Dyane, goddes of chastité,
Hath Theseus i-wrought in noble wise.
But yit had I forgeten to devyse
The nobil kervyng, and the purtretures,
The schap, the contynaunce of the figures,
That weren in these oratories thre.

Furst in the temple of Venus thou may se
Wrought in the wal, ful pitous to byholde,
The broken slepes, and the sykes colde;
The sacred[2] teeres, and the waymentyng;
The fuyry strokes of the desiryng,

---

1 See *ante*, p. 147, note 2.—The plan of the lists is taken strictly from that of a classical amphitheatre, such as it is described in Tertullian, *De Spectaculis*. Upon this subject Mr. Currey, in his valuable edition of this treatise, remarks:—'The games of the circus were introduced with a religious procession, and sacrifices to the idols, placed in vast numbers within the circus. The blood shed at the gladiatorial shows was supposed to propitiate the god Dis, whose altar was in the amphitheatre. The theatre was expressly dedicated to Venus, being *annexed to a temple of that goddess*.'

2 Secret.

That loves servauntz in her lyf enduren ;
The othes,[1] that her covenantz assuren.
Plesance and hope, desyr, fool-hardynesse,
Beaute and youthe, baudery and richesse,
Charmes and sorcery,[2] lesynges and flatery,
Dispense, busynes, and jelousy,
That werud of yolo guldes a gerland,
And a cukkow[3] sittyng on hire hand ;
Festes, instrumentz, carols, and daunces,
Lust and array, and al the circumstaunces
Of love, which I rekned and reken schal,
Ech by other were peynted on the wal.
And mo than I can make of mencioun.
For sothly al the mount of Setheroun,[4]
Ther Venus hath hir principal dwellyng,
Was schewed on the wal here portraying,[5]
With alle the gardyn, and al the lustynes:
Nought was forgete ; the porter Ydelnes,
Ne Narcisus the fayr of yore agon,
Ne yet the foly of kyng Salamon,
Ne eek the grete strengthe of Hercules,
Thenchauntementz of Medea and Cerces,
Ne of Turnus the hard fuyry corage,
The riche Cresus caytif in servage.
Thus may we see, that wisdom and riches,
Beaute ne sleight, strengthe ne hardynes,

---

[1] The Harl. MS. reads ' The othes, that by her covenantz assuren ;' but ' by' has been omitted in the text, following Speght and Tyrwhitt.

[2] *Sorcery*, the true reading has been restored by Mr. Wright. Tyrwhitt reads *force*. The use of charms for procuring love is very ancient. —See THEOCRITUS'S Φάρμακευτρια.

[3] A cuckoo is the emblem of unfaithfulness to the marriage vow. It is frequently alluded to by the Elizabethan writers, and supplies the burthen of many songs.—See *Love's Labour Lost*, Act v., sc. 2.

[4] Cithæron, sacred to Venus.

[5] Chaucer in this description has before him a church of the time in which he lived. When the whitewash is removed from the walls of our village churches, they are generally found to have been covered with fresco paintings of Scripture subjects.

Ne may with Venus holde champartye,[1]
For as sche luste the world than may sche gye.
Lo, all this folk i-caught were in hire trace,
Till they for wo ful often sayde allas.
Sufficeth this ensample oon or tuo,
And though I couthe reken a thousend mo.
The statu of Venus, glorious for to see,
Was naked fletyng in the large see,
And fro the navel doun all covered was
With wawes grene, and bright as eny glas.
A citole in hire right hand hadde sche,
And on hir heed, ful semely on to see,
A rose garland ful swete and wel smellyng,
And aboven hire heed dowves fleyng.
Biforn hir stood hir sone Cupido,
Upon his schuldres were wynges two;
And blynd he was, as it is often seene;
A bowe he bar and arwes fair and kene.[2]
Why schuld I nought as wel telle you alle
The portraiture, that was upon the walle
Within the temple[3] of mighty Mars the reede?
Al peynted was the wal in length and breede

[1] Champarty is a legal term signifying a conspiracy, in which one party agrees to help another to obtain an estate, on condition that, if obtained, it is to be divided between them. The meaning here will be, that wisdom and riches and the rest, though all conspiring together, cannot maintain a cause against Venus.

[2] The Harl. MS. reads *greene*. The reading in the text, which is evidently the true one, is that of some other MSS., and is followed by Tyrwhitt.

[3] The description of the Temple of Mars is derived from the *Thebais*, lib. vii., 40. The introduction of familiar images of crime and suffering into this fine symbolical picture is objected to by Tyrwhitt, Scott, and other critics, as incongruous; and Mr. Wright, in extenuation of the incongruity, suggests that it arises from the confusion in the mediæval mind between the god Mars and the planet of that name, which was supposed to shed its influence on these undignified callings and calamities. This is true as far as it goes, but it only removes the difficulty one step; for why should the butcher, the barber (or surgeon), the pickpurse, and all sanguinary mischances, be supposed to be under the influence of the planet Mars, unless they were held to be pleasing to

Like to the estres of the grisly place,
That hight the gret tempul of Mars in Trace,[1]
In that colde and frosty regioun,
Ther as Mars hath his sovereyn mancioun.
First on the wal was peynted a foreste,
In which ther dwelled neyther man ne beste,
With knotty knarry bareyn trees olde
Of stubbes scharpe and hidous to byholde;
In which ther ran a swymbul in a swough,[2]
As it were a storme schuld berst every bough:
And downward on an hil under a bent,
Ther stood the tempul of Marz armypotent,[3]

---

the god Mars? If, however, the subject be carefully considered, it will appear that Chaucer's is really the more sublime idea, and the truer symbolism. He paints no common-place picture of the 'pomp and circumstance of glorious war'—this may do for a tournament—but describes the genius of war as it manifests itself in the malignant passions which lead to strife and bloodshed: in the spirit of covetousness, which, contaminating commonwealths no less than individuals, generates hatred and contention; and in the development, even by the lower animals, of those evil propensities which become the more revolting when they assume the character of instincts. If some images seem at first sight ludicrous, such as the cook scalded for all his long ladle, let it be remembered, as a principle of art, how much the grotesque adds to the horror with which the sight of suffering affects the mind. Dryden, who rightly deemed himself informed by Chaucer's spirit, has hardly at all refined or elevated that grotesqueness, because he knew the power of familiar images. Neither magnitude nor remoteness, which are held to be elements of the sublime, strikes the imagination so forcibly as examples drawn from every-day experience. The general description of a battle is less impressive than the details of a single death; and the dignified fall of Cæsar in the Senate-house produces less terror than the execution of a common malefactor. The poet's object is to depict suffering in hideous and ordinary forms, in order to display the universality of the influence of the god, not only in great occurrences, but in the meanest incidents of life.

[1] The principal temple of Mars is described in the *Thebais* as being in Thrace, because of the warlike spirit of the inhabitants.

[2] Speght and Tyrwhitt, after some MSS., read *romble and a swough*. The reading in the text is from the Harleian MS., followed by Mr. Wright, who, however, furnishes no explanation of it. The *swymbul*, or sighing, heard through the general *swough*, or commotion, is finely imagined.

[3] This line has a redundant syllable, which makes it necessary to read *tempul of* as one foot. Dryden, with a just appreciation of its merit, has retained it, only thus correcting the irregularity of the metre:—

'The temple stood of Mars armipotent.'

Wrought al of burned steel, of which thentre
Was long and streyt, and gastly for to see.
And therout came a rage and suche a prise,[1]
That it maad al the gates for to rise.
The northen light[2] in at the dore schon,
For wyndow on the walle ne was ther noon,
Thorugh the which men might no light discerne.
The dores wer alle ademauntz eterne,
I-clenched overthward and endelong
With iren tough; and, for to make it strong,
Every piler the tempul to susteene
Was tonne greet, of iren[3] bright and schene.
Ther saugh I furst the derk ymaginyng
Of felony, and al the compassyng;
The cruel ire, as reed as eny gleede;
The pikepurs, and eek the pale drede;
The smyler with the knyf under his cloke;
The schipne brennyng with the blake smoke;
The tresoun of the murtheryng in the bed;[4]
The open werres, with woundes al bi-bled;
Contek with bloody knyf, and scharp manace.
Al ful of chirkyng was that sory place.

---

[1] Speght reads, *such a rage and a vise;* Tyrwhitt, *swiche a vise.* The meaning of the reading in the text is not obvious, but yet it appears to be the best; *prise* probably signifies *press*, crowd, tumult. This is supported by a reference to the Latin:—

Primus salit *impetus* amens
E foribus, cæcumque nefas, iræque rubentes
Exanguesque metus.—*Thebais*, vii., 47.

[2] Aurora borealis.

Læditur adversum Phœbi jubar, ipsaque sedem
Lux timet, et dirus contristat sidera fulgor.—*Thebais*, vii., 45.

Tyrwhitt does not notice the idea of the temple being illumined by the northern light, as derived from the *Theseida;* Chaucer, therefore, is probably entitled to the full credit of this fine image.

[3] The poet probably had in his mind a Norman cathedral, with its round massive piers, so different from the light elegant clustered shafts of the architecture of his own time, and so appropriate to the temple of the stern god of arms.

[4] In allusion to the Danaidæ.

The sleer of himself yet saugh I there,
His herte-blood hath bathed al his here;
The nayl y-dryve in the schode a-nyght;[1]
The colde deth, with mouth gapyng upright.
Amyddes of the tempul set mischaunce,
With sory comfort and evel contynaunce.
I saugh woodnes[2] laughying in his rage;
Armed complaint, outhees, and fiers outrage.[3]
The caroigne in the busshe, with throte y-corve:
A thousand slaine, and not of qualme y-storve;
The tiraunte, with the preye by force y-raft;
The toun destroied, ther was no thynge laft.
Yet sawgh I brente the schippes hoppesteres;[4]
The hunte strangled with the wild beres:
The sowe[5] freten the child right in the cradel;
The cook[6] i-skalded, for al his longe ladel.

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[1] An allusion, perhaps, to the death of Sisera.—*Judges*, iv.

[2] Lætusque furor.—*Thebais*, vii.

[3] The Harl. MS. reads—

'The hunt strangled with wilde bores corage,'

which is evidently corrupt, for the boar does not strangle, but rips up his pursuer; and the same words are applied immediately afterwards with greater propriety to the bear. Tyrwhitt's reading, which is more consonant with the accurate character of Chaucer's imagery, is therefore adopted in the text. The poet probably had in his mind the predatory incursions of the borderers of England and Scotland, which often involved the two countries in feuds, such as led to the battles of Chevy Chase or Otterbourne. The word *outhees*, meaning outcry, is from the barbarous Latin *Hutesium*, and enters into the composition of our expression, '*Hue and cry*,' and, indeed, of *outcry*.

[4] Bellatrices carinæ. Speght interprets this word *pilots* (gubernaculum tenentes); Tyrwhitt, *female dancers*, applied to ships as dancing on the waves. None of the commentators appear to have met the word elsewhere.

[5] This is not an uncommon accident in countries where the swine are allowed to roam at large, as was usual with our Saxon ancestors, and in Ireland at the present day. Dryden has not improved upon the passage by rendering it—

'The new-born babe by nurses overlaid.'

[6] We have here an illustration of the time when men lived in large communities, and cookery was performed on a grand scale, as when the whole garrison of a feudal castle, or an entire brotherhood of monks in an abbey, dined together in the common hall.

Nought beth forgeten the infortune of Mart;
The carter[1] over-ryden with his cart,
Under the whel ful lowe he lay adoun.
Ther wer also of Martz divisioun,
The barbour,[2] and the bowcher, and the smyth,
That forgeth scharpe swerdes on his stith.
And al above depeynted in a tour
Saw I conquest sittyng in gret honour,
With the scharpe swerd over his heed
Hangynge by a sotil twyne threed.[3]
Depeynted was ther the slaught of Julius,
Of grete Nero, and of Anthonius;
Al be that ilke tyme they were unborn,
Yet was here deth depeynted ther byforn,
By manasyng of Martz, right by figure,
So was it schewed right in the purtreture
As is depeynted in sterres above,
Who schal be slayn or elles deed for love.
Sufficeth oon ensample in stories olde,
I may not reken hem alle, though I wolde.
The statue of Mars upon a carte stood,
Armed, and loked grym as he were wood;
And over his heed ther schyneth two figures
Of sterres, that been cleped in scriptures,
That oon Puella, that othur Rubius.[4]
This god of armes was arayed thus.

---

[1] Et vacui currus, protritaque curribus ora.—*Thebais.*

[2] The barber in the middle ages exercised the office of blood-letter and chirurgeon generally: hence one of the mercantile companies in the Corporation of London is still called the Barber-surgeons' Company. The pole, usually fixed outside barbers' shops, 'was to show that the master of the shop practised surgery, and could breathe a vein as well as mow a beard; such a staff being to this day, by every village practitioner, put into the hand of a patient undergoing the operation of phlebotomy.'—*Antiquarian Repository.*

[3] Apparently an allusion to the sword of Damocles.

[4] The names of two figures in geomancy, representing two constellations in Heaven. Puella signifieth Mars retrograde, and Rubeus Mars direct.—S.

A wolf ther stood byforn him at his feet
With eyen reed, and of a man he eet;
With sotyl pencel depeynted was this storie,
In redoutyng of Mars and of his glorie.
Now to the temple of Dyane the chaste
As schortly as I can I wol me haste,
To telle you al the descripcioun.
Depeynted ben the walles up and down,
Of huntyng and of schamefast chastité.
Ther saugh I how woful Calystopé,[1]
Whan that Dyane was agreved with here,
Was turned from a womman to a bere,
And after was sche maad the loode-sterre;
Thus was it peynted, I can say no ferre;
Hire son is eek a sterre, as men may see.
Ther sawgh I Dyane[2] turned intil a tree,
I mene nought the goddes Dyane,
But Peneus doughter, the whiche hight Dane.
Ther saugh I Atheon[3] an hert i-maked,
For vengance that he saugh Dyane al naked;
I saugh how that his houndes han him caught,
And freten him, for that they knew him naught.
Yit i-peynted was a litel forthermore.
How Atthalaunce[4] huntyd the wild bore,
And Melyagre, and many another mo,
For which Dyane wrought hem care and woo.
Ther saugh I eek many another story,
The which me list not drawe to memory.
This goddes on an hert ful hye seet,
With smale houndes al aboute hire feet,
And undernethe hir feet sche had the moone,
Wexyng it was, and schulde wane soone.
In gaude greene hire statue clothed was,
With bowe in hande, and arwes in a cas.

[1] Callisto, a daughter of Lycaon, king of Arcadia.—See OVID'S *Fasti*, ii. 153.
[2] Daphne.—OVID'S *Metamorph.*, i., 450.
[3] Actæon.—OVID'S *Metamorph.*, iii., 138.
[4] Atalanta.—OVID'S *Metamorph.*, x., 560.

Hir eyghen caste sche ful lowe adoun,
Ther Pluto hath his derke regioun.
A womman travailyng[1] was hire biforn,
But for hire child so longe was unborn
Ful pitously Lucyna gan sche calle,
And seyde, 'Help, for thou mayst best of alle.'
Wel couthe he peynte lyfly that it wrought,
With many a floren he the hewes bought.
Now been thise listes maad, and Theseus
That at his grete cost arayed thus
The temples and the theatres every del,
Whan it was don, it liked him right wel.
But stynt I wil of Theseus a lite,
And speke of Palamon and of Arcite.
The day approcheth of her attournyng,[2]
That every schuld an hundred knightes bryng,
The batail to derreyne, as I you tolde;
And til Athenes, her covenant to holde,
Hath every of hem brought an hundred knightes,
Wel armed for the werre at alle rightes.
And sikerly ther trowed many a man
That never, siththen that this world bigan,
For to speke of knighthod of her hond,
As fer as God has maked sea or lond,
Nas, of so fewe, so good a company.
For every wight that loveth chyvalry,
And wold, his thankes,[3] have a passant name,
Hath preyed that he might be of that game;
And wel was him, that therto chosen was.
For if ther felle to morwe such a caas,
I knowe wel, that every lusty knight,
That loveth paramours, and hath his might,
Were it in Engelond, or elleswhere,
They wold, here thankes, wilne to be there.

---

[1] Diana, when invoked as the goddess presiding over child-birth, was called Lucina.

[2] Speght and Tyrwhitt read, *returning*. [3] See *ante*, p. 140, note 1.

To fighte for a lady; *benedicite!*
It were a lusty sighte for to see.
And right so ferden they with Palamon.
With him ther wente knyghtes many oon;
Some wol ben armed in an haburgoun,
In a bright brest plat and a gypoun;
And som wold have a peyre plates large;
And som wold have a Pruce scheld, or a targe;
Som wol been armed on here legges weel,
And have an ax, and eek a mace of steel.
Ther nys no newe gyse, that it nas old.
Armed were they, as I have you told,
Everich after his owen opinioun.
Ther maistow[1] se comyng with Palamoun
Ligurge himself, the grete kyng of Trace;
Blak was his berd, and manly was his face.
The cercles of his eyen in his heed
They gloweden bytwixe yolw and reed,
And lik a griffoun loked he aboute,
With kempe heres on his browes stowte;
His lymes greet, his brawnes hard and stronge,
His schuldres brood, his armes rounde and longe.
And as the gyse was in his contré,
Ful heye upon a chare of gold stood he,
With foure white boles in a trays.
In stede of cote armour in his harnays,
With nales yolwe, and bright as eny gold,
He had a bere skyn, cole-blak for old.
His lange heer y-kempt byhynd his bak,
As eny raven fether it schon for blak.[2]
A wrethe of gold arm-gret, and huge of wight,
Upon his heed, set ful of stoones bright,
Of fyne rubeus and of fyn dyamauntz.
Aboute his chare wente white alaunz,[3]

[1] Mayest thou.—See *ante*, p. 123, note 2. [2] For blackness.
[3] Speght interprets *alaunz*, greyhounds; Tyrwhitt, mastiffs. The latter was apparently misled by the fact that the wolf-dog, generally known by the name of the *Irish greyhound*, because used most recently

Twenty and mo, as grete as eny stere,
To hunte at the lyoun or at the bere,
And folwed him, with mosel fast i-bounde,
Colerd with golde, and torettes fyled rounde.
An hundred lordes had he in his route
Armed ful wel, with hertes stern and stoute.
With Arcita, in stories as men fynde,
The gret Emetreus, the kyng of Ynde,
Uppon a steede bay, trapped in steel,
Covered with cloth of gold dyapred wel,
Cam rydyng lyk the god of armes Mars.
His coote armour was of a cloth of Tars,
Cowched of perlys whyte, round and grete.
His sadil was of brend gold newe bete;
A mantelet upon his schuldre hangyng
Bret-ful of rubies reed, as fir sparclyng.
His crispe her lik rynges was i-ronne,
And that was yalwe, and gliteryng as the sonne.
His nose was heigh, his eyen were cytryne,
His lippes rounde, his colour was sangwyn,
A fewe freknes in his face y-spreynd,
Betwixe yolwe and somdel blak y-meynd,
And as a lyoun he his lokyng caste.
Of fyve and twenty yeer his age I caste.
His berd was wel bygonne for to sprynge;
His voys was as a trumpe thunderynge.
Upon his heed he wered of laurer grene
A garlond freisch and lusty for to sene.
Upon his hond he bar for his delyt
An egle[1] tame, as eny lylie whyt.

---

in that country, is called by Buffon *le matin*. It was a dog of great power and swiftness, of which specimens were preserved till within a few years by gentlemen of fortune as curiosities.

[1] The rage for hawking reached so great a height in the middle ages, that falcons were carried on the fist and petted on the most solemn occasions, and when not wanted for the sport. There are many examples of kings requiring so many falcons as ransom or tribute. To make Emetrius carry a tame eagle on his hand must, however, be an exaggeration, intended to give an idea of the gigantic strength and

An hundred lordes had he with him ther,
Al armed sauf here hedes in here ger,
Ful richely in alle maner thinges.
For trusteth wel, that dukes, erles, kynges,
Were gadred in this noble companye,
For love, and for encres of chivalrye.
Aboute the kyng ther ran on every part
Ful many a tame lyoun and lepart.
And in this wise thes lordes alle and some
Been on the Sonday to the cité come
Aboute prime, and in the toun alight.
This Theseus, this duk, this worthy knight,
Whan he had brought hem into his cité,
And ynned hem, everich at his degré
He festeth him, and doth so gret labour
To esen hem, and do hem al honour,
That yit men wene that no mannes wyt
Of non estat that cowde amenden it.
The mynstralcye, the servyce at the feste,
The grete giftes to the most and leste,
The riche aray of Theseus paleys,
Ne who sat first ne last upon the deys,
What ladies fayrest ben or best daunsyng,
Or which of hem can daunce best or sing,
Ne who most felyngly speketh of love;
What haukes sitten on the perche above,
What houndes lyen in the floor adoun:
Of al this make I now no mencioun;
But of theffect; that thinketh me the beste;
Now comth the poynt, and herkneth if you leste.
The Sonday night, or day bigan to springe,
When Palamon the larke herde synge,
Although it were nought day by houres tuo,
Yit sang the larke, and Palamon also

---

stature of the Indian king, and the strangeness of his tastes. The same remark applies to his being accompanied by *many* tame lions and leopards.

With holy herte, and with an heih corage
He roos, to wenden on his pilgrymage
Unto the blisful Cithera benigne,
I mene Venus, honorable and digne.
And in hire[1] hour he walketh forth a paas
Unto the lystes, ther hir temple was,
And doun he kneleth, and, with humble cheer
And herte sore, he seide as ye schal heer.
'Fairest of faire, o lady myn Venus,
Doughter of Jove, and spouse to Vulcanus,
Thou glader of the mount of Citheroun,
For thilke love thou haddest to Adeoun[2]
Have pité on my bitter teeres smerte,
And tak myn humble prayer to thin herte.
Allas! I ne have no langage for to telle
Theffectes ne the tormentz of myn helle;
Myn herte may myn harmes nat bewreye;
I am so confus, that I may not seye.
But mercy, lady bright, that knowest wel
My thought, and felest what harm that I fel,
Consider al this, and rew upon my sore,
As wisly as I schal for evermore
Enforce my might thi trewe servant to be,
And holde werre alday with chastité;
That make I myn avow, so ye me helpe.
I kepe nat of armes for to yelpe.[3]

---

[1] In a long note upon this place, Tyrwhitt quotes from the *Kalendrier de Bergiers*, published in the year 1500, from which it appears that the hours of the day were assigned to the several planets in the following order:—Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sol, Venus, Mercury, Luna. The first hour after sunrise belonged to the planet which gave its name to the day; in this case, being Sunday, the first hour belonged to Sol. Now, if the hours be counted, it will be found that the twenty-second, or two hours before sunrise on Monday morning, at which time Palamon set out for the Temple, belonged to Venus; and that Arcite and Emily were equally accurate in observing the proper hours for their several devotions.

[2] Adonis.

[3] I care not to whine about success in arms, spoken in contempt of mere glory.

Ne nat I aske to morn to have victorie,
Ne renoun in this caas, ne veyne glorie
Of pris of armes, blowyng up and doun,
But I wolde have ful possessioun
Of Emelye, and dye in thi servise;
Fynd thou the maner how, and in what wyse.
I recche nat, but it may better be,
To have victorie of him, or he of me,
So that I have my lady in myn armes.
For though so be that Mars be god of armes,
And ye be Venus, the goddes of love,
Youre vertu is so gret in heven above,
Thy temple wol I worschipe evermo,
And on thin auter, wher I ryde or go,
I wol do sacrifice, and fyres beete.
And if ye wol nat so, my lady sweete,
Than pray I the, to morwe with a spere
That Arcita me thurgh the herte bere.
Thanne rekke I nat, whan I have lost my lyf,
Though that Arcite have hir to his wyf.
This is theffect and end of my prayere;
Gif me my love, thou blisful lady deere.'
Whan thorisoun was doon of Palamon,
His sacrifice he dede, and that anoon
Ful pitously, with alle circumstances,
Al telle I nat as now his observances.
But at the last the statu of Venus schook,
And made a signe, wherby that he took
That his prayer accepted was that day.
For though the signe schewed a delay,
Yet wist he wel that graunted was his boone;
And with glad herte he went him hom ful soone.
The thrid hour inequal[1] that Palamon
Bigan to Venus temple for to goon,

[1] The hours being counted from sunrise were, of course, unequal, except at the equinox. The third hour after that of Venus will belong to Luna or Diana, according to the rule indicated in a note on the previous page.

Up roos the sonne, and up roos Emelye,
And to the temple of Dian gan sche hye.
Hir maydens, that sche with hir thider ladde,
Ful redily with hem the fyr they hadde,
Thencens, the clothes, and the remenant al
That to the sacrifice longen schal;
The hornes ful of meth, as is the gyse;
Ther lakketh nought to do here sacrifise.
Smokyng the temple, ful of clothes faire,
This Emelye with herte debonaire
Hir body wessch with watir of a welle;
But how sche dide I ne dar nat telle,
But it be eny thing in general;
And yet it were a game to here it al;
To him that meneth wel it were no charge:
But it is good a man be at his large.
Hir brighte her was kempt, untressed al;
A corone of a grene ok cerial
Upon hir heed was set ful fair and meete.
Tuo fyres on the auter gan sche beete,
And did hir thinges, as men may biholde
In Stace of Thebes[1] and the bokes olde.
Whan kynled was the fyre, with pitous cheere
Unto Dyan sche spak, as ye may heere.

'O chaste goddes of the woodes greene,
To whom bothe heven and erthe and see is seene
Queen of the regne of Pluto derk and lowe,
Goddes of maydenes, that myn hert has knowe
Ful many a yeer, ye woot what I desire,
As keep me fro the vengans of thilk yre,
That Atheon[2] aboughte trewely:
Chaste goddesse, wel wost thou that I
Desire to ben a mayden al my lyf,
Ne never wol I be no love ne wyf.

---

[1] In the *Thebais* of Statius, a Latin poet, who lived in the reign of Domitian, already quoted.

[2] Actæon.

I am, thou wost, yit of thi company,
A mayden, and love huntyng and venery,
And for to walken in the woodes wylde,
And nought to ben a wyf, and be with chylde.
Nought wol I knowe the company of man.
Now helpe me, lady, sythnes ye may and kan,
For the thre formes[1] that thou hast in the.
And Palamon, that hath such love to me,
And eek Arcite, that loveth me so sore,
This grace I praye the withouten more,
As sende love and pees betwix hem two;
And fro me torne awey here hertes so,
That al here hoote love, and here desire,
Al here besy torment, and al here fyre
Be queynt, or turned in another place.
And if so be thou wol do me no grace,
Or if my destyné be schapid so,
That I schal needes have on of hem two,
So send me him that most desireth me.
Biholde, goddes of clene chastité,
The bitter teeres that on my cheekes falle.
Syn thou art mayde, and keper of us alle,
My maydenhode thou kepe and wel conserve,
And whil I lyve a mayde I wil the serve.'
The fyres bren upon the auter cleer,
Whil Emelye was in hire preyer;
But sodeinly sche saugh a sighte queynt,
For right anon on of the fyres queynt,
And quyked agayn, and after that anon
That other fyr was queynt, and al agon;
And as it queynt, it made a whistelyng,
As doth a wete brond in his brennyng.
And at the brondes end out ran anoon
As it were bloody dropes many oon;[2]

[1] In Harl. MS. *thre* is omitted, evidently by mistake. Diana is called Diva Triformis, in heaven Luna, on earth Diana and Lucina, and in hell Proserpina.

[2] The quenching of one of the fires denoted the defeat of Palamon, and the quickening again his final success. The quenching of the other

For which so sore agast was Emelye,
That sche was wel neih mad, and gan to crie,
For sche ne wiste what it signifyed;
But oonely for feere thus sche cryed,
And wepte, that it was pité to heere.
And therewithal Dyane gan appeere,
With bow in hond, right as a hunteresse,
And seyd; 'A! doughter, stynt thyn hevynesse.
Among the goddes hye it is affermed,
And by eterne word write and confermed,
Thou schalt be wedded unto oon of tho,
That have for thè so moche care and wo;
But unto which of hem may I nat telle.
Farewel, for I may her no lenger dwelle.
The fyres which that on myn auter bren
Schuln the declare, or that thou go hen,
Thyn adventure of love, and in this caas.'
And with that word, the arwes in the caas
Of the goddesse clatren faste and rynge,
And forth sche went, and made vanysschynge,
For which this Emelye astoneyd was,
And seide, 'What amounteth this, allas!
I put me under thy protecciouu,
Dyane, and in thi disposicioun.'
And hoom sche goth anon the nexte way.
This is theffect, ther nys no mor to say.
The next houre of Mars folwynge this,[1]
Arcite to the temple walkyd is,
To fyry Mars to doon his sacrifise,
With al the rightes of his payen wise.
With pitous herte and heih devocioun,
Right thus to Mars he sayd his orisoun:
'O stronge god, that in the reynes cold
Of Trace honoured and lord art y-hold,

---

fire, and its dropping blood, and going out with a whistling noise, signifies Arcite's violent death and last sighs.

[1] The next hour of Mars following this, will be found to be three hours after that of Diana.

And hast in every regne and every land
Of armes al the bridel in thy hand,
And hem fortunest as the lust devyse,
Accept of me my pitous sacrifise.
If so be that my youthe may deserve,
And that my might be worthi for to serve
Thy godhed, that I may ben on of thine,
Then pray I the to rewe on my pyne,
For thilke peyne, and that hoote fuyre,
In which whilom thou brendest for desyre,
When that thou usedest the gret bewté
Of faire freissche Venus, that is so free,
And haddest hir in armes at thy wille;
And though the ones on a tyme mysfille,
When Vulcanus had caught the in his laas,
And fand the liggyng by his wyf, allaas!
For thilke sorwe that was in thin herte,
Have reuthe as wel upon my peynes smerte.
I am yong and unkonnyng, as thou wost,
And, as I trowe, with love offendid most,
That ever was eny lyves creature;
For sche, that doth me al this wo endure,
Ne rekketh never whether I synke or flete.
And wel I woot, or sche me mercy heete,
I moot with strengthe wyn hir in the place;
And wel I wot, withouten help or grace
Of the, ne may my strengthe nought avayle.
Then help me, lord, to morn[1] in my batayle,
For thilke fyr that whilom brende the,
As wel as this fire now brenneth me;
And do to morn that I have the victorie.
Myn be the travail, al thin be the glorie.
Thy soverein tempul wol I most honouren
Of any place, and alway most laboure
In thy plesaunce and in thy craftes strong.
And in thy tempul I wol my baner hong,[2]

---

1 To-morrow, in the morning; i. e., the morning which is coming.
2 It was usual for a knight to hang up his banner in the church,

And alle the armes of my companye,
And ever more, unto that day I dye,
Eterne fyr I wol bifore the fynde.
And eek to this avow I wol me bynde:
My berd, myn heer that hangeth longe adoun,
That nęver yit ne felt offensioun
Of rasour ne of schere, I wol thee give,[1]
And be thy trewe servaunt whiles I lyve.
Lord, have rowthe uppon my sorwes sore,
Gif me the victorie, I aske no more.'
The preyer stynt of Arcita the strange,
The rynges on the tempul dore that hange,
And eek the dores, clatereden ful fast,
Of which Arcita somwhat was agast.
The fyres brenden on the auter bright,
That it gan al the tempul for to light;
A swote smel anon the ground upgaf,
And Arcita anon his hand up haf,
And more encens into the fyr yet cast,
With othir rightes, and than atte last
The statu of Mars bigan his hauberk ryng.
And with that soun he herd a murmuryng
Ful lowe and dym, and sayde this, 'Victorie.'
For which he gaf to Mars honour and glorie.
And thus with joye, and hope wel to fare,
Arcite anoon unto his inne is fare,
As fayn as foul is of the bright sonne.
And right anon such stryf is bygonne[2]
For that grauntyng, in the heven above,
Bitwix Venus the goddes of love,

---

after the conclusion of his service, in acknowledgment that the grace to preserve it without reproach was from above. The banners of the Knights of the Garter are, to this day, hung up in St. George's Chapel.

[1] This custom appears to have been derived from the Jewish law St. Paul is said to have 'shorn his head at Cenchrea, for he had a vow.' Acts xviii. Cutting off the hair is a ceremony still observed at the profession of nuns.

[2] The strife in Heaven is taken from the *Thebais*, i., 212.

And Martz the sterne god armypotent,
That Jupiter was busy it to stent;
Til that the pale Saturnes the colde,
That knew so many of aventures olde,
Fond in his olde experiens an art,
That he ful sone hath plesed every part.
As soth is sayd, eelde hath gret avantage,
In eelde is bothe wisdom and usage;
Men may the eelde at-ren, but nat at-rede.
Saturne anon, to stynte stryf and drede,
Al be it that it be agayns his kynde,
Of al this stryf he can a remedy fynde.
'My deere doughter Venus,' quod Satourne,
'My cours, that hath so wyde for to tourne,[1]
Hath more power than woot eny man.
Myn is the drenchyng in the see so wan;
Myn is the prisoun in the derke cote;
Myn is the stranglyng and hangyng by the throte;
The murmur, and the cherles rebellyng;
The groyning, and the pryvé enpoysonyng,
I do vengance and pleyn correctioun,
Whiles I dwelle in the signe of the lyoun.
Myn is the ruen of the hihe halles,
The fallyng of the toures and the walles
Upon the mynour or the carpenter.
I slowh Sampsoun in schakyng the piler.
And myne ben the maladies colde,
The derke tresoun, and the castes olde;
Myn lokyng is the fadir of pestilens.
Now wepe nomore, I schal do my diligence,
That Palamon, that is myn owen knight,
Schal have his lady, as thou him bihight.
Thow Martz schal kepe his knight, yet nevertheles
Bitwixe you ther moot som tyme be pees;
Al be ye nought of oo complexioun,
That ilke day causeth such divisioun.

[1] Saturn being, of the planets then known, the most distant from the sun.

I am thi ayel, redy at thy wille;
Wepe thou nomore, I wol thi lust fulfille.'
Now wol I stynt of the goddes above,
Of Mars, and of Venus goddes of love,
And telle you, as pleinly as I can,
The grete effecte for that I bigan.

Gret was the fest in Athenus that day,
And eek that lusty sesoun of that May
Made every wight to ben in such plesaunce,
That al the Monday jousten they and daunce,
And spende it in Venus heigh servise.
But by the cause that they schuln arise
Erly a-morwe for to see that fight,
Unto their reste wente they at nyght.
And on the morwe whan the day gan spryng,
Of hors and hernoys noyse and clateryng
Ther was in the oostes al aboute;
And to the paleys rood ther many a route
Of lordes, upon steede and palfreys.
Ther mayst thou see devysyng of herneys
So uncowth and so riche wrought and wel
Of goldsmithry, of browdyng, and of steel;
The scheldes bright, testers, and trappures;
Gold-beten helmes, hauberks, and cote armures;
Lordes in paramentes on her coursers,
Knightes of retenu, and eek squyers
Rayhyng the speres, and helmes bokelyng,
Girdyng of scheeldes, with layneres lasyng;
Ther as need is, they were nothing ydel;
Ther fomen steedes, on the golden bridel
Gnawyng, and faste armurers also
With fyle and hamer prikyng to and fro;
Yemen on foote, and knaves many oon
With schorte staves, as thikke as they may goon;
Pypes, trompes, nakers, and clariounes,
That in the batail blewe bloody sownes;
The paleys ful of pepul up and doun,
Heer thre, ther ten, haldyng her questioun,

Dyvynyng of this Thebans knightes two.
Som seyden thus, som seyd it schal be so;
Som heelde with him with the blake berd,
Som with the ballyd, some with thikke hered;
Som sayd he loked grym as he wold fight;
He hath a sparth of twenti pound of wight.
Thus was the halle ful of devynyng,
Lang after that the sonne gan to spring.
The gret Theseus that of his sleep is awaked
With menstralcy and noyse that was maked,
Held yit the chambre of his paleys riche,
Til that the Thebanes knyghtes bothe i-liche
Honoured weren, and into paleys fet.
Duk Theseus was at a wyndow set,
Arayed right as he were god in trone.
The pepul preseth thider-ward ful sone
Him for to seen, and doon him reverence,
And eek herken his hest and his sentence.
An herowd on a skaffold made a hoo,[1]
Til al the noyse of the pepul was i-doo;
And whan he sawh the pepul of noyse al stille,
Thus schewed he the mighty dukes wille.
'The lord hath of his heih discrecioun
Considered, that it were destruccioun
To gentil blood, to fighten in this wise
Of mortal batail now in this emprise;
Wherfore to schapen that they schuld not dye,
He wol his firste purpos modifye.
No man therfore, up peyne of los of lyf,
No maner schot, ne pollax, ne schort knyf
Into the lystes sende, or thider bryng;
Ne schorte swerd for to stoke the point bytyng
No man ne draw, ne bere by his side.

[1] Cried Ho! to enjoin silence. Tyrwhitt, who reads *O*, supposes that it may be a contraction for Oyez, but quotes a passage from Holinshed which confirms the other supposition. 'The Duke of Norfolk was not fully set forward when the king cast down his warder, and the heralds cried Ho! Ho!'

Ne noman schal unto his felawe ryde
But oon cours, with a scharpe spere;
Feyne if him lust on foote, himself to were.
And he that is at meschief, schal be take,
And nat slayn, but be brought to the stake,
That schal be ordeyned on eyther syde;
But thider he schal by force, and ther abyde.
And if so falle, a cheventen be take
On eyther side, or elles sle his make,
No lenger schal the turneynge laste.
God spede you; goth forth and ley on faste.
With long swerd[1] and with mace fight your fille.
Goth now your way; this is the lordes wille.'
The voice of the poepul touchith heven,
So lowde cried thei with mery steven:
'God save such a lord that is so good,
He wilneth no destruccioun of blood!'
Up goth the trompes and the melodye.
And to the lystes ryde the companye
By ordynaunce, thurgh the cité large,
Hangyng with cloth of gold, and not with sarge.
Ful lik a lord this nobul duk can ryde,
These tuo Thebans on eyther side;
And after rood the queen, and Emelye,
And after hem of ladyes another companye,
And after hem of comunes after here degre.[2]
And thus they passeden thurgh that cité,

---

[1] A knight in armour was in very little danger from a cut of a broadsword, or even from the blow of a mace, but a thrusting sword might easily pierce through the joints of his armour. 'Still the Christians proved good men, and, secure in their unconquerable spirits, kept constantly advancing, while the Turks kept constantly threatening them in the rear; but their blows *fell harmless upon the defensive armour:* this caused the Turks to slacken in courage at the failure of their attempts, and they began to murmur in whispers of disappointment, crying out in their rage, 'that *our people were of iron and would yield to no blow.*'—*Itinerary of Richard I.*, by GEOFFREY DE VINSAUF, book iv. c. 19.

[2] These two lines are rejected by Mr. Wright, but are here restored from the Harl. MS. instead of the common reading. They are more in

And to the lystes come thei by tyme.
It nas not of the day yet fully pryme,
Whan sette was Theseus riche and hye,
Ypolita the queen and Emelye,
And other ladyes in here degrees aboute.
Unto the settes passeth al the route;
And west-ward, thorugh the gates of Mart,
Arcite, and eek the hundred of his part,
With baners red ys entred right anoon;
And in that selve moment Palamon
Is, under Venus, est-ward in that place,
With baner whyt, and hardy cheer of face.
In al the world, to seeke up and doun,
So even without variacioun
Ther nere suche companyes tweye.
For ther nas noon so wys that cowthe seye,
That any had of other avauntage
Of worthines, ne staat, ne of visage,
So evene were they chosen for to gesse.
And in two renges faire they hem dresse.
And whan here names i-rad were everychon,
That in here nombre gile were ther noon,
Tho were the gates schitt, and cried lowde:
'Doth now your devoir,[1] yonge knightes proude!'
The heraldz laften here prikyng up and doun;
Now ryngede the tromp and clarioun;
Ther is nomore to say, but est and west
In goth the speres into the rest;[2]
Ther seen men who can juste, and who can ryde;
In goth the scharpe spere into the side.
Ther schyveren schaftes upon schuldres thyk;
He feeleth thurgh the herte-spon the prik.

Chaucer's manner, from the minuteness of their description of the scene. The reader will remark that they are both Alexandrines.

[1] The usual word of encouragement on such occasions. It is curious that Nelson, in his celebrated signal before the battle of Trafalgar, should have adopted the very words of chivalry.

[2] The *rest* was a sort of holster attached to the stirrup, in which the butt end of the lance was placed to keep it steady.

Up sprengen speres on twenty foot on hight;
Out goon the swerdes as the silver bright.
The helmes there to-hewen and to-schrede;
Out brast the blood, with stoute stremes reede.
With mighty maces the bones thay to-breste.
He thurgh the thikkest of the throng gan threste.
Ther stomblen steedes strong, and doun can falle.
He rolleth under foot as doth a balle.
He feyneth on his foot with a tronchoun,
And him hurteleth with his hors adoun.
He thurgh the body hurt is, and siththen take
Maugré his heed, and brought unto the stake,
As forward was, right ther he most abyde.
Another lad is on that other syde.
And som tyme doth Theseus hem to rest,
Hem to refreissche, and drinke if hem lest.
Ful ofte a-day have this Thebans twoo
Togider y-met, and wrought his felaw woo;
Unhorsed hath ech other of hem tweye.
Ther nas no tygyr in the vale of Galgopleye,[1]
Whan that hir whelpe is stole, whan it is lite,
So cruel on the hunt, as is Arcite
For jelous hert upon this Palamon:
Ne in Belmary ther is no fel lyoun,
That hunted is, or is for hunger wood,
Ne of his prey desireth so the blood,
As Palamon to sle his foo Arcite.
The jelous strokes on here helmes byte;
Out renneth blood on bothe here sides reede.
Som tyme an ende ther is on every dede;
For er the sonne unto the reste went,
The strange kyng Emetreus gan hent

[1] This word is variously written; Colaphey, Galgaphey, Galapey. There was a town called Galapha, in Mauritania Tangitana, upon the river Malva (*Cellar. Geog. Ant.*, v. ii., p. 935), which, perhaps, may have given name to the vale here meant.—T. Belmarie was noticed, *ante*, p. 78, note 3.

This Palamon, as he faught with Arcite,
And his swerd in his fleissch he did byte;
And by the force of twenti he is take
Unyolden, and i-drawe unto the stake.
And in the rescous of this Palamon
The stronge kyng Ligurgius is born adoun;
And kyng Emetreus for al his strengthe
Is born out of his sadel his swerdes lengthe,
So hit him Palamon er he were take;
But al for nought, he was brought to the stake.
His hardy herte might him helpe nought;
He most abyde whan that he was caught,
By force, and eek by composicioun.[1]
Who sorweth now but woful Palamoun,
That moot nomore gon agayn to fight?
And whan that Theseus had seen that sight,
He cryed, 'Hoo! nomore, for it is doon!
Ne noon schal lenger unto his felaw goon.
I wol be trewe juge, and nought partye.
Arcyte of Thebes schal have Emelye,
That hath by his fortune hire i-wonne.'
Anoon ther is noyse bygonne
For joye of this, so lowde and hey withalle,
It semed that the listes wolde falle.
What can now fayre Venus doon above?
What seith sche now? what doth this queen of love?
But wepeth so, for wantyng of hir wille,
Til that hire teeres in the lystes fille;
Sche seyde: 'I am aschamed douteles.'
Satournus seyde: 'Doughter, hold thy pees.
Mars hath his wille, his knight hath his boone,
And by myn heed thou schalt be esed soone.'
The trompes with the lowde mynstralcy,
The herawdes, that ful lowde yolle and cry,
Been in here joye for daun Arcyte.
But herkneth me, and stynteth but a lite,

[1] By agreement.

Which[1] a miracle bifel anoon.
This Arcyte fersly hath don his helm adoun,
And on his courser for to schewe his face,
He priked endlange[2] in the large place,
Lokyng upward upon this Emelye;
And sche agayn him cast a frendly yghe,
(For wommen, as for to speke in comune,
Thay folwe alle the favour of fortune)
And was alle his in cheer, and in his hert.
Out of the ground a fyr infernal stert,
From Pluto send, at the request of Saturne,
For which his hors for feere gan to turne,
And leep asyde, and foundred as he leep;
And or that Arcyte may take keep,
He pight him on the pomel of his heed,
That in that place he lay as he were deed,
His brest to-broken with his sadil bowe.
As blak he lay as eny col or crowe,
So was the blood y-ronne in his face.
Anon he was y-born out of the place
With herte sore, to Theseus paleys.
Tho was he corven[3] out of his harneys,
And in a bed y-brought ful fair and blyve,
For yit he was in memory and on lyve,
And alway cryeng after Emelye.
Duk Theseus, and al his compaye,
Is comen hom to Athenes his cité,
With alle blys and great solempnité.
Al be it that this aventure was falle,
He nolde nought discomforten hem alle.
Men seyde eek, that Arcita schuld nought dye,
He schal be helyd of his maladye.
And of another thing they were as fayn,
That of hem alle ther was noon y-slayn,

[1] *What* a miracle.

[2] A feat of the manége, used for display. By spurring a horse on one side, and at the same time holding him tight with a severe bit, he is made to curvet, or advance end-long in short bounds.

[3] Cut out of his armour, *i. e.*, the laces which held it together were cut for greater expedition.

Al were they sore hurt, and namely oon,
That with a spere was thirled his brest boon.
To other woundes, and to broken armes,
Some hadde salve, and some hadde charmes,
Fermácyes of herbes, and eek save[1]
They dronken, for they wolde here lyves have.
For which this noble duk, as he wel can,
Comforteth and honoureth every man,
And made revel al the lange night,
Unto the straunge lordes, as was right.
Ne ther was holden o discomfytyng.
But as a justes or as a turneying;
For sothly ther was no discomfiture,
For fallynge is but an adventure.
Ne to be lad with fors unto the stake
Unyolden, and with twenty knightes take,
A person allone, withouten moo,
And rent forth by arme, foot, and too,
And eke his steede dryven forth with staves,
With footemen, bothe yemen and eke knaves,
It was aretted him no vylonye,[2]
Ne no maner man heldn it no cowardye.
For which Theseus lowd anon leet crie,
To stynten al rancour and al envye,
The gree as wel on o syde as on other,
And every side lik, as otheres brother;
And gaf hem giftes after here degré,
And fully heeld a feste dayes thre;[3]

---

1 *Sage*, or salvia, was considered a sovereign remedy in the midd ages, whence the proverb of the school of Salerno—

'Cur moriatur homo,
Dum salvia crescit in horto.'

2 See *ante*, p. 107, note 1.

3 Mr. Wright, in a note upon the place, says, that three days the usual duration of a feast in the middle ages, and quotes EDDIUS, *Vit. S. Wilf.* c. 17, who, when he consecrated his churc Ripon, held magnum convivium *trium dierum*.

And conveyed the knightes worthily
Out of his toun a journee[1] largely.
And hom went every man the righte way.
Ther was no more, but 'Farwel, have good day!'
Of this batayl I wol no more endite,
But speke of Palamon and of Arcyte.
Swelleth the brest of Arcyte, and the sore
Encresceth at his herte more and more.
The clothred blood, for eny leche-craft,
Corrumpith, and is in his bouk i-laft,
That nother veyne blood, ne ventusyng,
Ne drynk of herbes may ben his helpyng.
The vertu expulsif, or animal,
Fro thilke vertu cleped natural,
Ne may the venym voyde, ne expelle.
The pypes of his lounges gan to swelle,
And every lacerte in his brest adoun
Is schent with venym and corrupcioun.
Him gayneth nother, for to get his lyf,
Vomyt up-ward, ne doun-ward laxatif;
Al is to-broken thilke regioun;
Nature hath now no dominacioun.
And certeynly wher natur will not wirche,
Farwel phisik; go bere the man to chirche.
This al and som, that Arcyte moste dye.[2]
For which he sendeth after Emelye,
And Palamon, that was his cosyn deere.
Than seyd he thus, as ye schul after heere.
'Naught may the woful spirit in myn herte
Declare a poynt of my sorwes smerte
To you, my lady, that I love most;
But I byquethe the service of my gost
To you aboven every creature,
Syn that my lyf may no lenger dure.

[1] A day's journey.

[2] Tyrwhitt reads,—This *is* all and some; it means, this is the short and long of it, that Arcite must die.

Allas, the woo! allas, the peynes stronge,
That I for you have suffred, and so longe!
Allas, the deth! alas, myn Emelye!
Allas, departyng of our companye!
Allas, myn hertes queen! allas, my wyf!
Myn hertes lady, ender of my lyf!
What is this world? what asken men to have?
Now with his love, now in his colde grave
Allone withouten eny companye.
Farwel, my swete: farwel, myn Emelye!
And softe take me in your armes tweye,
For love of God, and herkneth what I seye.
I have heer with my cosyn Palamon
Had stryf and rancour many a day i-gon,
For love of yow, and eek for jelousie.
And Jupiter so wis my sowle gye,
To speken of a servaunt proprely,
With alle circumstaunces trewely,
That is to seyn, truthe, honour, and knighthede,
Wysdom, humblesse, astaat, and by kynrede,
Fredam, and al that longeth to that art,
So Jupiter have of my soule part,
As in this world right now ne know I non
So worthy to be loved as Palamon,
That serveth you, and wol do al his lyf.
And if that ye schul ever be a wyf,
Forget not Palamon, that gentil man.'
And with that word his speche faile gan;
For fro his herte up to his brest was come
The cold of deth, that him had overcome.
And yet moreover in his armes twoo
The vital strength is lost, and al agoo.
Only the intellect, withouten more,
That dwelled in his herte sik and sore,
Gan fayle, when the herte felte death,
Duskyng his eyghen two, and fayled breth.
But on his lady yit he cast his ye;
His laste word was, 'Mercy, Emelye!'

His spiryt chaunged was, and wente ther,
As I cam never, I can nat tellen wher.
Therefore I stynte, I nam no dyvynistre;[1]
Of soules fynde I not in this registre,
Ne me list nat thopynyouns to telle
Of hem, though that thei wyten wher they dwelle.
Arcyte is cold, ther Mars his soule gye;
Now wol I speke forth of Emelye.
Shright Emely, and howled Palamon,
And Theseus his sustir took anon
Swownyng, and bar hir fro the corps away.
What helpeth it to tarye forth the day,
To telle how sche weep bothe eve and morwe?
For in swich caas wommen can have such sorwe,
Whan that here housbonds ben from hem ago,
That for the more part they sorwen so,
Or elles fallen in such maladye,
That atte laste certeynly they dye.[2]
Infynyt been the sorwes and the teeres
Of olde folk, and folk of tender yeeres;
So gret a wepyng was ther noon certayn,
Whan Ector was i-brought, al freissh i-slayn,
As that ther was for deth of this Theban;
For sorwe of him ther weepeth bothe child and man
At Troye, allas! the pité that was there,
Cracchyng of cheekes, rending eek of here.
'Why woldist thou be deed,' this wommen crye,
'And haddest gold ynowgh, and Emelye?'[3]
No man mighte glade Theseus,
Savyng his olde fader Egeus,

---

[1] See introduction to this tale. [2] Ironical.

[3] This custom of expostulating with the dead and enumerating all the advantages they have left is still common at funerals of the lower orders in Ireland. The words, varied according to the circumstances of the person, are sung to a plaintive wailing tune, called a *keen*, by women hired for the purpose, who are called *keeners*. Specimens of these *keens* are to be found in Crofton Croker's *Irish Ballads*.

That knew this worldes transmutacioun,
As he hadde seen it torne up and doun,
Joye after woo, and woo aftir gladnesse:
And schewed him ensample and likenesse.
'Right as their deyde never man,' quod he,
'That he ne lyved in erthe in som degree,
Yit ther ne lyvede never man,' he seyde,
'In al this world, that som tyme he ne deyde.
This world nys but a thurghfare ful of woo,
And we ben pilgryms, passyng to and froo;
Deth is an ende of every worldly sore.'
And over al this yit seide he mochil more
To this effect, ful wysly to enhorte
The peple, that they schulde him recomforte.
Duk Theseus, with al his busy cure,
Cast busyly wher that the sepulture
Of good Arcyte may best y-maked be,
And eek most honurable in his degré.
And atte last he took conclusioun,
That ther as first Arcite and Palamon
Hadden for love the batail hem bytwene,
That in the selve grove, soote and greene,
Ther as he hadde his amorous desires,
His compleynt, and for love his hoote fyres,
He wolde make a fyr, in which thoffice
Of funeral he might al accomplice;
And leet comaunde anon to hakke and hewe
The okes old, and lay hem on a rewe
In culpouns well arrayed for to brenne.
His officers with swifte foot they renne,
And ryde anon at his comaundement.
And after this, Theseus hath i-sent
After a beer, and it al overspradde
With cloth of golde, the richest that he hadde.
And of the same sute he clad Arcyte;
Upon his hondes were his gloves white;
Eke on his heed a croune of laurer grene;
And in his hond a swerd ful bright and kene.

He leyde him bare the visage on the beere,[1]
Therwith he weep that pité was to heere.
And for the poeple schulde see him alle,
Whan it was day he brought hem to the halle,
That roreth of the cry and of the soun.
Tho cam this woful Theban Palamoun,
With flotery berd, and ruggy asshy heeres,
In clothis blak, y-dropped al with teeres,
And, passyng other, of wepyng Emelye,
The rewfullest of al the companye.
And in as moche as the service schulde be
The more nobul and riche in his degré,
Duk Theseus leet forth thre steedes bryng,
That trapped were in steel al gliteryng,
And covered with armes of dan Arcyte.
Upon the steedes, that weren grete and white,
Ther seeten folk, of which oon bar his scheeld,
Another his spere up in his hondes heeld;
The thridde bar with him his bowe Turkeys,
Of brend gold was the caas and eek the herneys;
And riden forth a paas with sorwful chere
Toward the grove, as ye schul after heere.
The nobles of the Grekes that ther were
Upon here schuldres carieden the beere,
With slak paas, and eyhen reed and wete,
Thurghout the cité, by the maister streete,
That sprad was al with blak, and wonder hye
Right of the same is al the stret i-wrye.
Upon the right hond went olde Egeus,
And on that other syde duk Theseus,

---

[1] Tyrwhitt observes on this line—'If this expression were in Milton, the critics would not fail to call it *an elegant Grecism*. In Chaucer we can only hope that it may be allowed to be an *elegant Anglicism*.' Froissart says, that the corpse of Edward III. was carried 'tout au long de la cité de Londres, *à viaire descouvert*, jusques à Westmonstier, vol. i. c. 326. This appears to have been the general custom. It is alluded to in the *Friar of Orders Grey*, in Percy's *Reliques*:—

'Here bore him, bare-faced on his bier,
Six proper youths and tall.'

With vessels in here hand of gold wel fyn,
As ful of hony, mylk, and blood, and wyn;
Eke Palamon, with a gret companye;
And after that com woful Emelye,
With fyr in hond, as was at that time the gyse,[1]
To do thoffice of funeral servise.
Heygh labour, and ful gret apparailyng
Was at the service and at the fyr makyng,
That with his grene top the heven raughte,
And twenty fadme of brede tharme straughte;
This is to seyn, the boowes were so brode,
Of stree first was ther leyd ful many a loode.
But how the fyr was makyd up on highte,
And eek the names how the trees highte,
As ook, fyr, birch, asp, aldir, holm, popler,
Wilw, elm, plane, assch, box, chesteyn, lynde, laurer,
Mapul, thorn, beech, hasil, ew, wyppyltre,
How they weren felde, schal nought be told for me;
Ne how the goddes ronnen up and doun,
Disheryt of here habitacioun,
In which they whilom woned in rest and pees,
Nymphes, Faunes, and Amadryes;
Ne how the beestes and the briddes alle
Fledden for feere, whan the woode was falle;
Ne how the ground agast was of the light,
That was nought wont to see no sonne bright;
Ne how the fyr was couchid first with stree,
And thanne with drye stykkes cloven in three,
And thanne with grene woode and spicerie,
And thanne with cloth of gold and with perrye,
And gerlandes hangyng with ful many a flour,
The myrre, thensens with al so gret odour;
Ne how Arcyte lay among al this,
Ne what richesse aboute his body is;
Ne how that Emely, as was the gyse,
Putt in the fyr of funeral servise;

[1] The whole description of the funeral and games is taken from the sixth book of the *Thebais*.

Ne how she swowned when sche made the fyre,
Ne what sche spak, ne what was hire desire;
Ne what jewels men in the fyr tho cast,
Whan that the fyr was gret and brente fast;
Ne how sum caste her scheeld, and summe her spere,
And of here vestimentz, which that they were,
And cuppes ful of wyn, and mylk, and blood,
Unto the fyr, that brent as it were wood;
Ne how the Grekes with an huge route
Thre tymes ryden al the fyr aboute
Upon the lefte hond, with an heih schoutyng,
And thries with here speres clateryng;
And thries how the ladyes gan to crye;
Ne how that lad was home-ward Emelye;
Ne how Arcyte is brent to aschen colde;
Ne how the liche-wake[1] was y-holde
Al thilke night, ne how the Grekes pleye
The wake-pleyes, kepe I nat to seye;
Who wrastleth best naked, with oyle enoynt,
Ne who that bar him best in no disjoynt.
I wol not telle eek how they ben goon
Hom til Athenes whan the pley is doon.
But schortly to the poynt now wol I wende,
And maken of my longe tale an ende.

By proces and by lengthe of certeyn yeres
Al styntyd is the mornyng and the teeres
Of alle Grekys, by oon general assent.
Than semed me ther was a parlement

---

[1] From the Saxon *lic*, a corpse, like the German *leich*, and wake, a vigil. The custom of watching with dead bodies is very ancient in this country, and lingered till lately among the Roman Catholics in the North. See, in Scott's *Border Minstrelsy*, a curious rhyme sung on such occasions. The 'wake-pleyes,' mentioned two lines lower down, may still be traced in the games usual at wakes among the Irish peasantry. These, as well as our own custom of laying out in state the bodies of persons of distinction, are no doubt derived from the Pagan funeral ceremonies, which the rulers of the early church, in deference to the inveterate prejudices of their heathen converts, permitted to remain, and endeavoured to christianize.

At Athenes, on a certeyn poynt and cas;
Among the whiche poyntes spoken was
To han with certeyn contrees alliaunce,
And have fully of Thebans obeissance.
For which this noble Theseus anon
Let senden after gentil Palamon,
Unwist of him what was the cause and why;
But in his blake clothes sorwfully
He cam at his comaundement on hye.
Tho sente Theseus for Emelye.
Whan they were sette, and hussht was al the place,
And Theseus abyden hadde a space
Or eny word cam fro his wyse brest,
His eyen set he ther as was his lest,
And with a sad visage he syked stille,
And after that right thus he seide his wille.

'The firste moevere of the cause above,
Whan he first made the fayre cheyne of love,[1]
Gret was theffect, and heigh was his entente;
Wel wist he why, and what therof he mente;
For with that faire cheyne of love he bond
The fyr, the watir, the eyr, and eek the lond
In certeyn boundes, that they may not flee;
That same prynce and moevere eek,' quod he,
'Hath stabled, in this wrecched world adoun,
Certeyn dayes and duracioun
To alle that er engendrid in this place,
Over the which day they may nat pace,
Al mowe they yit wel here dayes abregge;
Ther needeth non auctorité tallegge;
For it is preved by experience,
But that me lust declare my sentence.

---

[1] This sublime philosophy is derived from Boethius, *De Consolatione Phil.* ii. met. 8:—

'Hanc rerum seriem ligat,
Terras ac pelagus regens,
Et cœlo imperitans, amor.'

Here Platonism is elevated by Christianity.

Than may men wel by this ordre discerne,
That thilke moevere stabul is and eterne.
Wel may men knowe, but it be a fool,
That every partye dyryveth from his hool.
For nature hath nat take his bygynnyng
Of no partye ne cántel of a thing,
But of a thing that parfyt is and stable,
Descendyng so, til it be corumpable.
And therfore of his wyse purveaunce
He hath so wel biset his ordenaunce,
That spices[1] of thinges and progressiouns
Schullen endure by successiouns,
And nat eterne be withoute lye:
This maistow understand and se at ye.[2]
'Lo the ook,[3] that hath so long norisschyng
Fro tyme that it gynneth first to spring,
And hath so long a lyf, as we may see,
Yet atte laste wasted is the tree.
'Considereth eek, how that the harde stoon
Under oure foot, on which we trede and goon,
Yit wasteth it, as it lith by the weye.
The brode ryver som tyme wexeth dreye.
The grete townes see we wane and wende.
Then may I see that al thing hath an ende.
'Of man and womman se we wel also,
That wendeth in oon of this termes two,
That is to seyn, in youthe or elles in age,
He moot ben deed, the kyng as schal a page;
Sum in his bed, som in the deepe see,
Som in the large feeld, as men may se.
Ther helpeth naught, al goth thilke weye.
Thanne may I see wel that al thing schal deye.

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[1] Species. [2] See at eye, by experience.

[3] This passage is taken from the *Theseida*. It is in what Chaucer calls 'high style,' and is in accordance with the mediæval taste for apologues, ridiculed by Shakespeare in Falstaff's personation of Henry IV. 'For though the camomille, the more it is trodden on, the more it groweth, &c.'—*Henry IV.*, Part I., Act ii.

What maketh this but Jubiter the kyng?
The which is prynce and cause of alle thing,
Convertyng al unto his propre wille,
From which he is dereyned, soth to telle.
And here agayn no creature on lyve
Of no degré avayleth for to stryve.
'Than is it wisdom, as thenketh me,
To maken vertu of necessité,
And take it wel, that we may nat eschewe,
And namely that that to us alle is dewe.
And who so gruccheth aught, he doth folye,
And rebel is to him that al may gye.
And certeynly a man hath most honour
To deyen in his excellence and flour,
Whan he is siker of his goode name.
Than hath he doon his freend, ne him, no schame.
And glader ought his freend ben of his deth,
Whan with honour is yolden up the breth,
Thanne whan his name appelled is for age;
For al forgeten is his vasselage.
Thanne is it best, as for a worthi fame,
To dye whan a man is best of name.
The contrary of al this is wilfulnesse.
Why grucchen we? why have we hevynesse,
That good Arcyte, of chyvalry the flour,
Departed is, with worschip and honour
Out of this foule prisoun of this lyf?
Why gruccheth heer his cosyn and his wyf
Of his welfare, that loven him so wel?
Can he hem thank? nay, God woot, never a del,
That bothe his soule and eek hemself offende,
And yet they may here lustes nat amende.
'What may I conclude of this longe serye,
But aftir wo I rede us to be merye,
And thanke Jubiter of al his grace?
And or that we departe fro this place,
I rede that we make, of sorwes two,
O parfyt joye lastyng ever mo:

And loketh now wher most sorwe is her-inne,
Ther wol we first amenden and bygynne.
'Sustyr,' quod he, 'this is my ful assent,
With all thavys heer of my parlement,
That gentil Palamon, your owne knight,
That serveth yow with herte, will, and might,
And ever hath doon, syn fyrst tyme ye him knewe,
That ye schul of your grace upon him rewe,
And take him for your housbond and for lord:
Lene me youre hand, for this is oure acord.
Let see now of your wommanly pité.
He is a kynges brothir sone, pardee;
And though he were a pore bachiller,[1]
Syn he hath served you so many a yeer,
And had for you so gret adversité,
It moste be considered, trusteth me.
For gentil mercy aughte passe right.'
Than seyde he thus to Palamon ful right;
'I trowe ther needeth litel sermonyng
To make you assente to this thing.
Com neer, and tak your lady by the hond.'
Bitwix hem was i-maad anon the bond,
That highte matrimoyn or mariage,
By alle the counseil of the baronage.
And thus with blys and eek with melodye
Hath Palamon i-wedded Emelye.
And God, that al this wyde world hath wrought,
Send him his love, that hath it deere i-bought.
For now is Palamon in al his wele,
Lyvynge in blisse, richesse, and in hele,
And Emelye him loveth so tendirly,
And he hir serveth al so gentilly,
That never was ther wordes hem bitweene
Of jelousy, ne of non othir tene.
Thus endeth Palamon and Emelye;
And God save al this fayre companye!

[1] Bachelor, the lowest rank of knighthood.

THE PROLOGE OF THE MYLLER.

WHAN that the Knight had thus his tale i-told,
In al the route nas ther yong ne old,
That he ne seyde it was a noble story,
And worthi to be drawen to memory;
And namely the gentils everichoon.
Our Host tho lowh and swoor, 'So moot I goon,
This goth right wel; unbokeled is the male;[1]
Let se now who schal telle another tale;
For trewely this game is wel bygonne.
Now telleth ye, sir Monk, if that ye konne
Somwhat, to quyte with the knightes tale.'
The Myller that for drunken was al pale,[2]
So that unnethe upon his hors he sat,
He wold avale nowther hood ne hat,
Ne abyde no man for his curtesye,
But in Pilates[3] voys he gan to crye,

[1] Apparently a proverbial expression derived from the market, and meaning, literally, that the bale, or bale of goods, is opened and the ware exposed for the customers' inspection; metaphorically, that the business is well begun.

[2] All pale for drunkenness. It does not seem here the German particle *ver*trunken, but a preposition meaning *à force de*, for very drunkenness. There are several examples: see two, 'for old' and 'for blak,' *ante*, p. 158. Others occur elsewhere.

[3] In the gruff, hoarse voice assumed by the actors who played the character of Pilate in the popular mysteries of the Passion. The 'mysteries' or 'miracles,' founded on Scripture, or the Lives of the Christian Martyrs, were often performed by ecclesiastics in churches, for the purpose of instructing the unlearned people in the substance of Scripture history, or exciting them to zeal by the force of example. So early as the time of William I., Matt. Paris relates that Geoffrey, a learned Norman, composed a play on the martyrdom of St. Catherine. Mr. Price, the learned editor of Warton, says, that the earliest miracle play extant in English is *Our Saviour's Descent into Hell*, in MS. of the time of Edward II. There is this curious passage in Lambarde's *Topographical Dictionary*, written about the year 1570. 'In the dayes of ceremonial religion, they used at Wytney (in Oxfordshire) to set fourthe yearly, in manner of a shew or interlude, the Resurrection of our Lord, &c. . . . . The like to which I myselfe, being then a childe, once sawe in Poule's Churche in London, at a feast of Whitsuntide; wheare the comynge down of the Holy Gost was set forthe by a white pigeon, that was let to fly out of a hole that yet is to be sene in the mydst of the roofe of the greate ile,' &c. See also the series

And swor by armes and by blood and bones,
'I can a noble tale for the noones,
With which I wol now quyte the knightes tale.'
Oure Hoost saw wel how dronke he was of ale,
And seyde, 'Robyn, abyde, my leve brother,
Som bettre man schal telle first another;
Abyd, and let us worken thriftyly.'
'By Goddes soule!' quod he, 'that wol nat I,
For I wol speke, or elles go my way.'
Oure Host answerd, 'Tel on, a devel way!
Thou art a fool; thy witt is overcome.'
'Now herkneth,' quod this Myller, 'al and some;
But first I make a protestacioun,
That I am dronke, I knowe wel by my soun;
And therfore if that I mys-speke or seye,
Wyte it the ale of Southwerk, I you preye;
For I wol telle a legende and a lyf
Bothe of a carpenter and of his wyf,
How that the clerk hath set the wrightes cappe.'
The Reve answered and seyde, 'Stynt thi clappe.
Let be thy lewed drunken harlottrye.
It is a synne, and eek a greet folye
To apeyren eny man, or him defame,
And eek to brynge wyves in ylle name.
Thou mayst ynowgh of other thinges seyn.'
This dronken Miller spak ful sone ageyn,
And seyde, 'Leeve brother Osewold,
Who hath no wyf, he is no cokewold.

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of plays exhibited at Chester, in 1327, at the expense of the different trading companies, of which an edition was edited by Mr. Wright for the Shakspeare Society; also *The Towneley and Coventry Mysteries*. It appears from Strype's *Grindal*, p. 82, that this practice of acting plays in churches lingered even after the Reformation, except that profane stories had taken the place of religious. The celebrated ceremonies of the Holy Week in the Sistine Chapel, to which the English abroad always flock in such numbers, are something of the same character. The events of the Passion are read from one of the Evangelists in a simple but very touching chaunt, by different divisions of the choir, one division taking the words of our Lord, another of the Scribes and Pharisees, another of the people, and a fourth reading the narrative.

But I seye not therfore that thou art oon,
Ther been ful goode wyves many oon.
And ever a thousand goode agayns oon badde;
That knowest thou wel thyself, but if thou madde.[1]
Why art thou angry with my tale now?
I have a wyf, pardé! as well as thow,
Yet nolde I, for the oxen in my plough,
Take upon me more than ynough;
Though that thou deme thiself that thou be oon,[2]
I wol bileeve wel that I am noon.
An housbond schal not be inquisityf
Of Goddes pryveté, ne of his wyf.
So that he may fynde Goddes foysoun there,
Of the remenaunt needeth nought enquere.'
What schuld I seye, but that this proud Myllere
He nolde his wordes for no man forbere,
But tolde his cherlisch tale in his manere.
Me athinketh, that I schal reherce it heere;
And therfor every gentil wight I preye,
For Goddes love, as deme nat that I seye,
Of yvel entent, but for I moot reherse
Here wordes alle, al be they better or werse,
Or elles falsen som of my mateere.[3]
And therfor who so list it nat to heere,
Turne over the leef, and cheese another tale;
For he schal fynde ynowe bothe gret and smale,
Of storial thing that toucheth gentilesse,
And eek moralité, and holynesse.[4]
Blameth nat me, if that ye cheese amys.
The Miller is a cherl, ye know wel this;

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[1] *Madde* is here a verb, meaning to be going mad. Tyrwhitt in his text omits these two lines, but gives them in his notes in a less correct form. The Miller probably meant this compliment ironically.

[2] There is much humour in the Miller's taking it for granted that the reason Oswald objects to his tale, even before he has heard it, is because he thinks it must needs apply to his own case.

[3] See *ante*, p. 107, note 1.

[4] It may be mentioned, as a specimen of the errors with which even the best MSS. abound, that in the Harleian MS. this line is written—

'And eek more ryalté and holinesse.'

So was the Reeve, and othir many mo,
And harlotry they tolden bothe two.
Avyseth you, and put me out of blame;
And men schulde nat make ernest of game.

THE MILLERES TALE.

[THE origin of this story has not been ascertained. Mr. Wright thinks that it is probably founded upon a *fabliau*, current in Chaucer's time, but now either lost or buried among the MSS. of some public library; an opinion to which Tyrwhitt also inclines. For the licentiousness of this and some of the other tales, no valid excuse can be offered. The necessities of the plan, and the manners of the age, are sometimes urged in extenuation, and the plea may be allowed to some extent in mitigation of judgment; but even Chaucer himself felt that an apology was due, and has attempted one, which, as has been shown before, is, in fact, no apology at all. In his treatment of the subject, the poet has introduced the various incidents and characters with great comic power and effect. No circumstance is omitted which could add grotesqueness to the general effect. The contrast between Nicholas's outward manners and real pursuits; the incongruity between the hymn he chooses to sing and the plan he is concocting; his oracular mode of declaring his vision; the carpenter's excessive distress at the prospect of losing his Alisoun, who is all the time plotting against his honour: his complacency in the superiority of his own common sense over the clerk's book-learning; Absolon's devices to make himself agreeable; his preparations for the hoped-for accolade, and his sudden disgust for his former objects of pursuit, are all thrown in with the hand of a master in this kind of broad humour. The antiquarian and historical aspects of this tale are not without interest as illustrating the manners of the times. 'In the description of the young wife of our philosopher's host,' says Warton, 'there is great elegance, with a mixture of burlesque allusions; not to mention the curiosity of a

female portrait drawn with so much exactness at such a distance of time.' Here, too, the poet exhibits that growing feeling of hostility to the clergy which prompted the writers of the latter part of the middle ages to rejoice in placing them and the service of the Church in a ludicrous point of view; for Absolon, being a parish clerk, was of course, in accordance with the custom of the primitive and mediæval churches, in minor orders.]

WHILOM ther was dwellyng at Oxenford
A riche gnof,[1] that gestes heeld to boorde,[2]
And of his craft he was a carpenter.
With him ther was dwellyng a pore scoler,
Had lerned art, but al his fantasye
Was torned for to lerne astrologye,
And cowde a certeyn of conclusiouns
To deme by interrogaciouns,
If that men axed him in certeyn houres,
Whan that men schuld han drought or ellys schoures;
Or if men axed him what schulde bifalle
Of everything, I may nought reken hem alle.
This clerk was cleped heende Nicholas;
Of derne love he cowde and of solas;
And therwith he was sleigh and ful privé,
And lik a mayden meke for to se.
A chambir had he in that hostillerye[3]
Alone, withouten eny compaignye,
Ful fetisly i-dight with herbes soote,
And he himself as swete as is the roote
Of lokorys, or eny cetewale.
His almagest[4], and bookes gret and smale,

[1] An example of the way in which the final *n* of the indefinite article is made the agent of changes in words; thus, *a gnof* becomes an oaf; *a nedder*, an adder; *a nowch*, an ouch; *an eft*, a newt; &c.

[2] It appears from this passage that the contemplated measure of permitting students at the University to live in private lodgings was the ancient practice. The abuses to which it led, as exemplified in the tale, were probably the cause of its discontinuance.

[3] The Harl. MS. reads *in his hostillerye*. It may be observed, that it was usual in the University for two or more students to have one room.—W.

[4] The Arabs, from whom the western nations derived a great part

His astrylabe,[1] longyng for his art,
His augrym stoones,[2] leyen faire apart
On schelves couched at his beddes heed,
His presse i-coverèd with a faldyng reed.
And all above ther lay a gay sawtrye,
On which he made a-nightes melodye,
So swetely, that al the chambur rang;
And *Angelus ad virginem*[3] he sang.
And after that he sang the kynges note;[4]
Ful often blissed was his mery throte,
And thus this sweete clerk his tyme spente,
After his frendes fyndyng and his rente.[5]

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of their early knowledge of science (see HALLAM, *Middle Ages*, c. i., 77), called the Μεγαλη Συνταξις of Ptolemy *Almegisthi*, from *al*, Arabic for *the*, and μεγιστη, *greatest*. It was the handbook of astrology at that time.

[1] An instrument for taking the sun's altitude, and making other astronomical observations. Chaucer has left a treatise on its use, of which the introduction, addressed to his 'litel son Louis,' is a charming example of the poet's familiar prose style. In Speght's time this treatise was still considered the best authority on the branch of astronomy of which it treats.

[2] *Augrim* is a corruption of *algorithm*, the Arabic for *numeration*. Augrim stones were the counters or pebbles anciently used to facilitate calculations, which last word is derived from *calculus*, a pebble.

[3] On the Sundays in Advent and Feast of the Annunciation, the antiphons and responses, appointed to be sung in the processions and other parts of the Roman service, are taken from the evangelical history of the appearance of the Angel Gabriel to the blessed Virgin, beginning, 'Missus est Gabriel *angelus ad virginem*.' This was perhaps the song intended in the text. But it is more probably a metrical hymn to be found only in the Salisbury or some other local Breviary.

[4] All the commentators acknowledge themselves unable to point out the piece of music intended by 'the kynges note.' Warton supposes it to mean a *chant royal*, or *ballad royal*,—that is, as Pasquer describes it, 'a song in honour of God, the holy Virgin, or any other argument of dignity.' Hawkins and Burney cite the passage as illustrative of the cultivation of music in the 14th century. The former passes over 'the kynges note' without observation; the latter has the following:—'The *chant royal* was an appellation given to poems on lofty subjects in the early times of French poetry.'—*His of Mus.*, ii., 375. This loose explanation increases the obscurity. It is more likely that the *chant royal* was a *strain of music*, like the 'Cantus Peregrinus' of Gregorian Psalmody, or (of later date) our 'Grand Chant.'

[5] Living upon what his friends found him, and his own income.

This carpenter had weddid newe a wyf,
Which that he loved more than his lyf;
Of eyghteteene yeer sche was of age,
Gelous he was, and heeld hir narwe in cage,
For sche was wild and yong, and he was old,
And demed himself belik a cokewold,
He knew nat Catoun,[1] for his wit was rude,
That bad man schulde wedde his similitude.
Men schulde wedde aftir here astaat,
For eelde and youthe ben often at debaat.
But syn that he was brought into the snare,
He moste endure, as othere doon, his care.
Fair was the yonge wyf, and therwithal
As eny wesil hir body gent and smal.
A seynt sche wered, barred al of silk;
A barm-cloth[2] eek as whit as morne mylk
Upon hir lendes, ful of many a gore.
Whit was hir smok, and browdid al byfore
And eek byhynde on hir coler aboute,
Of cole-blak silk, withinne and eek withoute.
The tapes of hir white voluper
Weren of the same sute of hire coler;
Hir filet brood of silk y-set ful heye.
And certeynly sche hadd a licorous eyghe;
Ful smal y-pulled weren hir browes two,
And tho were bent, as blak as a slo.
Sche was wel more blisful on to see
Than is the newe perjonette tree;

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[1] Tyrwhitt says that the maxim here ascribed to Caton, the French form of Cato, is to be found in a supplement to the moral distichs entitled *Facetus, inter Auctores octo Morales*, Lugdun. 1528, iii.

'Duc tibi prole parem sponsam moresque venustam,
Si cum pace velis vitam deducere justam.'

[2] This word is derived from the Saxon *bearm*, the lap, and is therefore interpreted in the glossaries *an apron*; but it seems rather to mean *a skirt* in general, as being worn 'upon her lendes,' and made to fit her person with 'many a gore.' The *seynt* means not only the girdle, but the *bodice*, like the Latin *zona*; and so the whole of her dress is accounted for.

And softer than the wol is of a wethir.
And by hir gurdil hyng a purs of lethir,
Tassid with silk, and perled[1] with latoun.
In al this world to seken up and doun
There nys no man so wys, that couthe thenche
So gay a popillot, or such a wenche.
For brighter was the schynyng of hir hewe,
Than in the Tour the noble i-forged newe.[2]
But of hir song, it was as lowde and yerne
As eny swalwe chiteryng on a berne.
Therto sche cowde skippe, and make game,
As eny kyde or calf folwyng his dame.
Hir mouth was sweete as bragat is or meth,
Or hoord of apples, layd in hay or heth.
Wynsyng sche was, as is a joly colt;
Long as a mast, and upright as a bolt.[3]
A broch sche bar upon hir loue coleer,
As brod as is the bos of a bocleer.
Hir schos were laced on hir legges heyghe;
Sche was a primerole, a piggesneyghe,[4]
For eny lord have liggyng in his bedde,
Or yet for eny good yeman to wedde.
Now sir, and eft sir, so bifel the cas,
That on a day this heende Nicholas

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[1] Ornamented with knobs of latten, like pearls.

[2] The gold noble of this period was a very beautiful coin: specimens are engraved in Ruding's *Annals of the Coinage*. It was coined in the Tower of London, the place of the principal London mint.—W.

[3] These two lines are quoted by Dryden as perfect specimens of the heroic metre, and it is difficult to believe that Chaucer could have produced them, and many others as perfect, by chance, as the advocates of the rhythmical theory must necessarily suppose.

[4] A term of endearment, supposed by Tyrwhitt to mean *pig's eye*, like the Latin *ocellus*, the eyes of the pig being very small. But it seems preferable to interpret it *little pig*, sucking pigs being pretty, delicate little animals. So Doll Tearsheet, intending to be very tender, calls Falstaff, 'Thou whoreson little, tidy Bartholomew boar-pig.' *Henry IV.*, Act ii., sc. 4. Shadwell (*Plays*, vol. i. 157) uses in this sense, not only the word *pigsney*, but *birdsney*. It occurs again in the *Remedy of Love*, 'Come hither ye little pigsnye, ye little babe.'

Fil with this yonge wyf to rage and pleye
Whil that hir housbond was at Oseneye,[1]
As clerkes ben ful sotil and ful queynte.
And pryvely he caught hir by the queynte,
And seyde, 'I-wis, but if I have my wille,
For derne love of the, lemman, I spille.'
And heeld hir harde by the haunche boones,
And seyde, 'Lemman, love me al at ones,
Or I wol dye, as wisly God me save.'
And sche sprang out as doth a colt in trave:
And with hir heed sche wried fast awey,
And seyde, 'I wol nat kisse the, by my fey!
Why let be,' quod sche, 'lat be thou, Nicholas,
Or I wol crye out harrow and allas!
Do wey pour handes for your curtesye!'
This Nicholas gan mercy for to crye,
And spak so faire, and profred him so faste,
That sche hir love him graunted atte laste,
And swor hir oth by seynt Thomas of Kent,
That sche wol be at his commaundement,
Whan that sche may hir leysir wel aspye.
'Myn housbond is so ful of jelousie,
That but ye wayten wel, and be pryvé,
I woot right wel I am but deed,' quod sche:
'Ye mosten be ful derne as in this caas.'
'Therof ne care the nought,' quod Nicholas:
'A clérk hath litherly byset his while,
But if he cowde a carpenter bygyle.'
And thus they ben acorded and i-sworn
To wayte a tyme, as I have told biforn.
Whan Nicholas had doon thus every del,
And thakked hire aboute the lendys wel,
He kist hir sweet, and taketh his sawtrye,
And pleyeth fast, and maketh melodye.

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[1] An abbey in the suburbs of Oxford, founded by Edward the Confessor, at the instance, as Lambarde states in his *Topographical Dictionary*, of his Queen Editha, who was directed to the place 'by the chatterynge of pies.'

Than fyl it thus, that to the parisch chirche
Cristes owen workes for to wirche,[1]
This goode wyf went on an haly day;
Hir forheed schon as bright as eny day,
So was it waisschen, whan sche leet hir werk.
Now ther was of that chirche a parisch clerk,
The which that was i-cleped Absolon.
Crulle was his heer, and as the gold it schon,
And strowted as a fan right large and brood;
Ful streyt and evene lay his jolly schood.
His rode was reed, his eyghen gray as goos,
With Powles wyndowes[2] corven on his schoos.
In hosen reed he went ful fetusly.
I-clad he was ful small and propurly,
Al in a kirtel of a fyn wachet;
Schapen with goores in the newe get.
And therupon he had a gay surplys,
As whyt as is the blosme upon the rys.
A mery child[3] he was, so God me save;
Wel couthe he lete blood, and clippe and schave,[4]
And make a chartre of lond and acquitaunce.
In twenty maners he coude skip and daunce,

[1] Ironical.

[2] Perhaps this means that his shoes were cut in squares (rather lozenges) like panes of glass. In the Cistercian statutes the monks are forbidden to wear *calceos fenestratos*.—T. Mr. Wright states that three paintings formerly existing on the walls of St. Stephen's chapel, Westminster, represented shoes of Chaucer's time, which were cut in patterns not unlike the tracery of church windows; and that it has been conjectured that the phrase *Powles windowes* refers especially to the rose window of old St. Paul's, which resembled the ornament on one of some beautiful samples of ancient shoes preserved in the museum of Mr. C. Roach Smith. Mr. Wright gives cuts of these shoes in his edition of Chaucer, published by the Percy Society. Figures of such shoes are not uncommon.

[3] The term *child*, as is well known ever since the publication of *Childe Harold*, was applied in the middle ages to young men. The hymn supposed to have been sung in the fire by Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, is called, in the Book of Common Prayer, the *Song of the Three Children*. Childe Waters, the Child of Elle, and other examples occur in Percy's collection.

[4] See *ante*, p. 155, note 2.

After the scole of Oxenforde[1] tho,
And with his legges casten to and fro;
And pleyen songes on a small rubible;
Ther-to he sang som tyme a lowde quynyble.[2]
And as wel coude he pleye on a giterne.
In al the toun nas brewhous ne taverne
That he ne visited with his solas,
Ther as that any gaylard tapster was.
But soth to say he was somdel squaymous
Of fartyng, and of speche daungerous.
This Absolon, that jolly was and gay,
Goth with a senser on the haly day,
Sensing[3] the wyves of the parisch fast;
And many a lovely look on hem he cast,
And namely on this carpenteres wyf;
To loke on hire him thought a mery lyf;
Sche was so propre, sweete, and licorous.
I dar wel sayn, if sche had ben a mous,

[1] See *ante*, p. 82, note 2.

[2] *Quynyble* is, probably, formed from the verb *quintoire*, to play or sing a part in fifths. The extra part, above four, in the old separate part-books is called *quintus*, the next *sextus*, and so on. A *quynyble* (or *quintible*) may, therefore, have been a fifth (generally a high tenor, or counter tenor, which seems implied by the expression 'lowde quynyble';) and this view is supported by the word *quatrible*, which occurs in a very early treatise on descant. A *quynyble* then means a *part* extemporized a fifth above the rest; a practice called also by the old musicians 'organizing,' much practised by boys, and consequently associated with youthfulness, a sufficient reason for the parish clerk to show off in this manner. *Rubible*, or *ribible*, (absurdly described by Speght as a gittern *or* fiddle,) was, no doubt, the Arabian *rebeb*, or *rebab*, rendered in Italian *rebeca*; an instrument of two strings, with a finger-board 'fretted,' and played upon by a bow; in short, a primitive violin. The *giterne*, or *cittern*, was a form of guitar, (the same word,) each string of which had a duplicate for more rapid articulation, as well as to augment the tone. It was played upon by a quill.

[3] It was the custom for the clerks who carried the censers to swing them in front of the congregation, so that the perfume was diffused over the whole church. Lord Cloncurry, in his *Personal Recollections*, gives a curious illustration of the jealousy with which personal priority was regarded 'in administering the honours of the censer' even in the last century. So in the *Persone's Tale* (*de superbiâ*) among the different kinds of pride is reckoned the desire to '*ben encensed*, or gon to the offrynge before his neghebore.'

And he a cat, he wold hir hent anoon.[1]
This parisch clerk, this joly Absolon,
Hath in his herte such a love longyng,
That of no wyf ne took he noon offryng;[2]
For curtesy, he seyde, he wolde noon.
The moone at night ful cleer and brighte schoon,
And Absolon his giterne hath i-take,
For paramours he seyde he wold awake.
And forth he goth, jolyf and amerous,
Til he cam to the carpenteres hous,
A litel after the cok had y-crowe,
And dressed him up by a schot[3] wyndowe
That was under the carpenteres wal.
He syngeth in his voys gentil and smal—

'Now, deere lady, if thi wille be,
I praye yow that ye wol rewe on me.'

Ful wel acordyng to his gyternyng.
This carpenter awook, and herde him syng,
And spak unto his wyf, and sayde anoon,
'What Alisoun, herestow not Absolon,

---

[1] This thought occurs in a less ridiculous form in the *Border Minstrelsy*, vol. iii.:—

'O gin my love were a pickle of wheat,
And growing upon yon lily lea,
And I myself a bonny wee bird,
Awa wi' that pickle o' wheat I wad flee.'

[2] The money collected at the offertory was formerly applied partly to the maintenance of the ministers of the church (of whom Absolon was an inferior one), as appears from the verses taken from 1 Cor. ix., appointed in the Book of Common Prayer to be read at that part of the service.

[3] This word occurs in the beautiful ballad of *Clerk Saunders*, in the *Border Minstrelsy*, vol. ii., in a connexion which shows that it cannot mean *shut*, as Tyrwhitt supposes:—

'Then she has ta'en a crystal wand,
And she has stroken her troth thereon;
She has given it him out at the *shot window*,
With mony a sad sigh and bitter groan.'

A *shot window* was, therefore, probably a [illegible] bow window, from which the inmates might shoot any one attempting to force an entrance by the door, as Mr. Wright well observes.

That chaunteth thus under oure boures wal?[1]
And sche answered hir housbond therwithal,
'Yis, God woot, Johan, I heere it every del.'
This passeth forth; what wil ye bet than wel?
Fro day to day this joly Absolon
So woweth hire, that him is wo-bigon.
He waketh al the night and al the day,
To kembe his lokkes brode and made him gay.
He woweth hire by mene and by brocage,[2]
And swor he wolde ben hir owne page.
He syngeth crowyng as a nightyngale;
And sent hire pyment, meth, and spiced ale,
And wafres pypyng hoot out of the gleede;[3]
And for sche was of toune, he profred meede.
For som folk wol be wonne for richesse,
And som for strokes, som for gentillesse.
Som tyme, to schewe his lightnes and maistrye,
He pleyeth Herod[4] on a scaffold hye.
But what avayleth him as in this caas?
Sche so loveth this heende Nicholas,
That Absolon may blow the bukkes horn;[5]
He ne had for al his labour but a skorn.
And thus sche maketh Absolon hir ape,
And al his ernest torneth to a jape.

---

[1] The Harl. MS. reads *boure smal*. *Boure* means primarily a chamber.

[2] Woos her by the mediation and intervention or brokerage of common acquaintances.

[3] These were probably the French *gaufres*, whence the word wafer, *gu* and *w* being convertible, as *Walter* from *Gaultier*. They are usually sold at fairs, and are made of a kind of batter poured into an iron instrument, which shuts up like a pair of snuffers. It is then thrust into the fire, and when it is withdrawn and opened, the *gaufre*, or wafer, is taken out, and eaten, 'piping hot out of the gleede,' as here described.

[4] This is much in character. The parish clerks always took a principal share in the representation of the mysteries, and playing the part of Herod gave Absolon an opportunity of showing himself off to advantage in the kingly character. In the years 1390 and 1409 the parish clerks of London acted plays for eight days successively at Clerkenwell, in presence of most of the nobility and gentry of the kingdom.—See WARTON, sect. xxxiv.

[5] This, as it appears, is equivalent to the phrase 'to pipe in an ivy leaf.'

Ful soth is this proverbe, it is no lye,
Men seyn right thus alway, the ney slye
Maketh the ferre leef to be loth.[1]
For though that Absolon be wood or wroth,
Bycause that he fer was from here sight,
This Nicholas hath stonden in his light.
Now bere thè wel, thou heende Nicholas,
For Absolon may wayle and synge allas.
And so bifelle it on a Satyrday
This carpenter was gon to Osenay,
And heende Nicholas and Alisoun
Acordid ben to this conclusioun,
That Nicholas schal schapen hem a wyle
This sely jelous housbond to begyle;
And if so were this game wente aright,
Sche schulde slepe in his arm al night,
For this was hire desir and his also.
And right anoon, withouten wordes mo,
This Nicholas no lenger wold he tarye,
But doth ful softe into his chambur carye
Both mete and drynke fo, a day or tweye.
And to hir housbond bad hir for to seye,
If that he axed after Nicholas,
Sche schulde saye, sche wiste nat wher he was;
Of al that day sche saw him nat with eye;
Sche trowed he were falle in som maladye,
For no cry that hir mayden cowde him calle
He nolde answere, for nought that may bifalle.
Thus passeth forth al that ilke Satyrday,
That Nicholas stille in his chambre lay,
And eet, and drank, and dede what him leste
Til Soneday the sonne was gon to reste.
This sely carpenter hath gret mervaile
Of Nicholas, or what thing may him ayle,

[1] Gower has this proverb, *Conf. Amant.* iii.

'An olde sawe is, whc ...
In place wher he may b ...
He maketh the ferre leef loth ...

And seyde, 'I am adrad, by seynt Thomas!
It stondeth nat aright with Nicholas;
God schilde that he deyde sodeinly.
This world is now ful tykel sikerly;
I saugh to-day a corps y-born to chirche.
That now on Monday last I saugh him wirche.
Go up,' quod he unto his knave, 'anoon;
Clepe at his dore, or knokke with a stoon;
Loke how it is, and telle me boldely.'
This knave goth him up ful sturdily,
And at the chambir dore whil he stood,
He cryed and knokked as that he were wood;
'What how? what do ye, mayster Nicholay!
How may ye slepen al this longe day?'
But al for nought, he herde nat o word,
An hole he fond right lowe upon the boord,
Ther as the cat was wont in for to creepe,
And at that hole he loked in ful deepe,
And atte laste he hadde of him a sight.
This Nicholas sat ever gapyng upright,
As he had loked on the newe moone.
Adoun he goth, and tolde his mayster soone,
In what aray he sawh this ilke man.
This carpenter to blessen[1] him bygan,
And seyde, 'Now help us, seynte Frideswyde![2]
A man woot litel what him schal betyde.
This man is falle with his astronomye
In som woodnesse, or in som agonye.
I thought ay wel how that it schulde be.
Men schulde nought knowe of Goddes pryvyté.
Ye, blessed be alwey a lewed man,
That nat but oonly his bileeve can.[3]

[1] To cross himself.

[2] Seinte is the feminine form of seint. St. Frideswide was patroness of a considerable priory at Oxford, and being a Saxon is invoked with the more propriety by the carpenter.—T.

[3] All that he knew in the way of learning was his creed. Learning consisted primarily in knowing Latin, and in this language even poor people were taught to repeat their *credo*, or *belief*.

So ferde another clerk with astronomye;
He walked in the feeldes for to prye
Upon the sterres, what ther schulde bifalle,
Til he was in a marle pit i-falle.[1]
He saugh nat that. But yet, by seint Thomas!
Me reweth sore for heende Nicholas;
He schal be ratyd of his studyyng,
If that I may, by Jhesu heven kyng?
Gete me a staf, that I may underspore,
Whil that thou, Robyn, hevest up the dore:
He schal out of his studyyng, as I gesse.'
And to the chambir dore he gan him dresse.
His knave was a strong karl for the noones,
And by the hasp he haf it up at oones;
And in the floor the dore fil doun anoon.
This Nicholas sat stille as eny stoon,
And ever he gapyd up-ward to the eyr.
This carpenter wende he were in despeir,
And hent him by the schuldres mightily,
And schook him harde, and cryed spitously,
'What, Nicholas? what how, man? loke adoun;
Awake, and thynk on Cristes passioun.
I crowche the from elves and from wightes.
Therwith the night-spel[2] seyde he anon rightes,
On the foure halves of the hous aboute,
And on the thresshfold of the dore withoute.

[1] He alludes to a story told of Thales by Plato in his *Theætetus*, but our author probably read it in the *Cento Novelle Antiche*. N. 36.—T.

[2] These spells were probably derived from the ancient exorcisms common to the Jewish and Christian churches.—(Acts xix. 13.) When used by the vulgar they generally consisted of a string of unmeaning words of imposing sound. There is an example in *Lear*, Act iii., sc. iv.:—

'St. Withold footed thrice the wold,
He met the night-mare and her nine-fold,
Bid her alight and her troth plight,
And aroint thee, witch! aroint thee!'

Tyrwhitt, for *nyghtes verray*, reads *nightes mare*, which is more intelligible. The *white* paternoster seems to be a corruption for the *wight* or strong paternoster; *scil.*, strong against evil spirits. There is a very curious 'spell' in Anglo-Saxon, much resembling this, but longer. It is given in RASKE'S *Grammar* and THORPE'S *Analecta*.

Lord Jhesu Crist, and seynte Benedight,
Blesse this hous from every wikkede wight,
Fro nyghtes verray, the white Pater-noster;
Wher wonestow now, seynte Petres soster?'
And atte laste, lieende Nicholas
Gan for to syke sore, and seyde, 'Allas!
Schal al the world be lost eftsones now?'
This carpenter answerde, 'What seystow?
What? thenk on God, as we doon, men that swinke.'
This Nicholas answerde, 'Fette me drynke;
And after wol I speke in pryvytè
Of certeyn thing that toucheth the and me;
I wol telle it non other man certayn.'
This carpenter goth forth, and comth agayn,
And brought of mighty ale a large quart.
Whan ech of hem y-dronken had his part,
This Nicholas his dòre gan to schitte,
And dede this carpenter doun by him sitte,
And seide, 'Johan, myn host ful leve and deere,
Thou schalt upòn thy trouthe swere me heere,
That to no wight thou schalt this counsel wreye;
For it is Cristes counsel that I seye,
And if thou telle it man, thou art forlore;
For this vengaunce thou schalt han therfore,
That if thou wreye me, thou schalt be wood.'
'Nay, Crist forbede it for his holy blood!'
Quod tho this sely man, 'I am no labbe,
Though I it say, I am nought leef to gabbe.
Say what thou wolt, I schal it never telle
To child ne wyf, by him that harwed helle!'[1]

---

[1] It was the prevailing belief in the middle ages, founded on 1 Peter, iii. 19, iv. 6, and Coloss. ii. 15, that our Lord, when he descended into the place of departed spirits, preached the Gospel to those who before His incarnation, had served God as far as their imperfect knowledge enabled them; that he thus made them partakers of the benefits of the atonement, and rescued them from the prison in which they had been confined, called the *limbus patrum*. This was called the 'Harrowing of Hell,' of which there is a beautiful etching in Albert Durer's *Der Kleine Passion*. 'In the year 1487,' says Warton, 'while Henry VII. kept his residence at the Castle of Winchester, on occasion of the birth of Prince

'Now, Johan,' quod Nicholas, 'I wol not lye:
I have i-founde in myn astrologye,
As I have loked in the moone bright,
That now on Monday next, at quarter night,
Schal falle a reyn, and that so wilde and wood,
That half so gret was never Noes flood.
This worlde,' he seyde, 'more than an hour
Schal ben i-dreynt, so hidous is the schour:
Thus schal mankynde drench, and leese his lyf.'
This carpenter answered, 'Allas, my wyf!
And shal she drenche? allas, myn Alisoun!'
For sorwe of this he fel almost adoun,
And seyde, 'Is ther no remedy in this caas?'
'Why yis, for Gode,' quod heende Nicholas;
'If thou wolt worken aftir lore and reed;
Thou maist nought worke after thin owen heed.
For thus seith Salomon, that was ful trewe,
Werke by counseil, and thou schalt nat rewe.[1]
And if thou worken wolt by good counsail,
I undertake, withouten mast and sail,
Yet schal I saven hir, and the, and me.
Hastow nat herd how saved was Noe,
Whan that our Lord had warned him biforn,
That al the world with watir schulde be lorn?'
'Yis,' quod this carpenter, 'ful yore ago,'
'Hastow nought herd,' quod Nicholas, 'also
The sorwe of Noe with his felaschipe,
That he hadde or he gat his wyf[2] to schipe?

Arthur, on a Sunday, during the time of dinner, he was entertained with a religious drama called *Christi descensus ad inferos*, or Christ's descent into hell.' Registr. Priorat. S. Swithin. Winton. MS. He also gives, from the Harl. MSS., a poem on the same subject (since printed by Mr. Halliwell), beginning—

'Alle herkneth to me now;
A strif wolle I tellen ou
Of Jhesu ant of Sathan
Tho Jhesu wes to helle y gan.'

The first edition of the Thirty-nine Articles asserted this doctrine; but it was afterwards thought better to leave the members of the Church of England to their liberty in interpreting a text of Scripture.

[1] Prov. ix. 14.

[2] This is probably an allusion to a supposed dispute between Noah

Him hadde wel lever, I dar wel undertake,
At thilke tyme, than alle his wetheres blake,
That sche hadde had a schip hirself allone.
And therfore wostow what is best to doone?
This axeth hast, and of an hasty thing
Men may nought preche or make taryyng.
Anon go gete us fast into this in
A knedyng trowh or elles a kemelyn,
For ech of us; but loke that they be large,
In which that we may rowe as in a barge,
And have therin vitaille suffisant
But for o day; fy on the remenant;
The water schal aslake and gon away
Aboute prime upon the nexte day.
But Robyn may not wite of this, thy knave,
Ne ek thy mayde Gille I may not save;
Aske nought why; for though thou aske me,
I wol nat tellen Goddes pryveté.
Sufficeth the, but if that thy witt madde,[1]
To have as gret a grace as Noe hadde.

---

and his wife, as represented in the religious plays or mysteries (see *ante*, p. 188, note 3), of which the following specimen is taken from Mr. Wright's edition of the *Chester Whitsun Playes*, printed for the Shakspeare Society:—

Noe. Wife, come in, why standes thou there?
Thou art ever froward, that dare I swere.
Come in on Godes halfe; tyme it were,
For fear lest that we drowne.

Wife. Yea, sir, set up your saile,
And rowe forth with evil haile,
For withouten anie faile,
I wil not oute of this towne;
But I have my gossepes everich one
One foote further I wil not gone:
They shall not drown, by St. John,
And I may save their life.
They loved me full well, by Christ;
But thou will let them into thy chist,
Ellis rowe forth, Noe, when thou list,
And get thee a newe wife.

At last Sem, with the assistance of his brethren, fetches her on board by force; and upon Noah's welcoming her, she gives him a box on the ear.

[1] Be mad; *madde* is here a verb.

Thy wyf schal I wel saven out of doute.
Go now thy wey, and speed the heer aboute:
And whan thou hast for hir, and the, and me,
I-gotten us this knedyng tubbes thre,
Than schalt thou hange hem in the roof ful hie,
That no man of oure purveaunce aspye;
And whan thou thus hast doon as I have seyd,
And hast our vitaille faire in hem y-leyd,
And eek an ax to smyte the corde a-two
Whan that the water cometh, that we may goo,
And breke an hole an hye upon the gable
Into the gardyn-ward over the stable,
That we may frely passen forth oure way,
Whan that the grete schour is gon away;
Than schaltow swymme as mery, I undertake,
As doth the white doke aftir hir drake;
Than wol I clepe, How Alisoun, how Jon,[1]
Beoth merye, for the flood passeth anon.
And thou wolt seye, Heyl, maister Nicholay,
Good morn, I see the wel, for it is day.
And than schul we be lordes al oure lyf
Of al the world, as Noe and his wyf.
But of oo thing I warne the ful right,
Be wel avysed of that ilke nyght,
That we ben entred into schippes boord,
That non of us ne speke not a word,
Ne clepe ne crye, but be in his preyere,
For it is Goddes owne heste deere.
Thy wyf and thou most hangen fer a-twynne,
For that bitwixe you schal be no synne,[2]

[1] The familiar appellation for Johan.

[2] It was part of the moral theology of that age that matrimony almost necessarily involved the commission of, at least, venial sin.—See Dens' *Theology*. In the *Persone's Tale* (remedium contra luxuriam) this doctrine is stated. 'The trewe effect of mariage clensith fornicacioun, and replenischith holy chirche of good lynage; for that is the ende of mariage, and it *chaungeth dedly synne into venyal synne betwixe hem that ben wedded*.' This almost seems a form of Manicheism, a belief that matter, and therefore the body, is essentially evil, which, while condemned in terms by the Church, yet became deeply-rooted in her

No more in lokyng than ther schal in dede.
This ordynaunce is seyd;[1] so God me speede.
To morwe at night, whan men ben aslepe,
Into our knedyng tubbes wol we crepe,
And sitte ther, abydyng Goddes grace.
Go now thy way, I have no lenger space
To make of this no lenger sermonyng;
Men seyn thus, send the wyse, and sey no thing;
Thou art so wys, it needeth nat the teche.
Go, save oure lyf, and that I the byseche.
This seely carpenter goth forth his way,
Ful ofte he seyd, 'Allas, and weylaway!'
And to his wyf he told his pryveté,
And sche was war, and knew it bet than he,
What al this queinte caste was for to seye.
But natheles sche ferd as sche schuld deye,
And seyde, 'Allas! go forth thy way anoon,
Help us to skape, or we be ded echon.
I am thy verray trewe wedded wyf;
Go, deere spouse, and help to save oure lyf.'
Lo, which a gret thing is affecciouu![2]
A man may dye for ymaginacioun,
So deepe may impressioun be take.
This seely carpenter bygynneth quake;
Him thenketh verrayly that he may se
Noes flood come walking as the see
To drenchen Alisoun, his hony deere.
He weepeth, wayleth, maketh sory cheere;
He siketh, with ful many a sory swough,
And goth, and geteth him a knedyng trough,

theology. Of this doctrine Coleridge observes, in his *Table-Talk*, 'Even the best and most enlightened men in Romanist countries attach a notion of impurity to the marriage of a clergyman [he might have carried it farther]; and can such a feeling be without its effect on wedded life in general? Impossible! and the morals of both sexes in Spain, Italy, France, &c., prove it abundantly.' The doctrine was probably founded on Matt. xix. 12, Exod. xix. 15, 1 Sam. xxi. 4, 1 Cor. vii., and forms the key to the eremitic and monastic system.

[1] An affectation of the oracular solemnity assumed by fortune-tellers.

[2] Fancy.

And after that a tubbe, and a kymelyn,
And pryvely he sent hem to his in,
And heng hem in the roof in pryveté.
His owne hond than made laddres thre,
To clymben by the ronges and the stalkes
Unto the tubbes hangyng in the balkes;
And hem vitayled, bothe trough and tubbe,
With breed and cheese, with good ale in a jubbe,
Suffisyng right ynough as for a day.
But or that he had maad al this array,
He sent his knave and eek his wenche also
Upon his neede to Londone for to go,
And on the Monday, whan it drew to nyght,
He schette his dore, withouten candel light,
And dressed al this thing as it schuld be.
And schortly up they clumben alle thre.
They seten stille wel a forlong way:
'Now, *Pater noster*, clum,'[1] quod Nicholay,
And 'clum,' quod Jon, and 'clum,' quod Alisoun.
This carpenter seyd his devocioun,
And stille he sitt, and byddeth[2] his prayere,
Ay waytyng on the reyn, if he it heere.
The deede sleep, for verray busynesse,
Fil on this carpenter, right as I gesse,
Abowten courfew[3] tyme, or litel more.
For travail of his goost he groneth sore,

---

[1] Tyrwhitt says this word is derived from the Saxon, *clumian*, to mutter. *Clum*, however, seems to have meant merely silence, the sense in which it appears to be used in the text.

[2] To *bid* is to pray, and *bead* is *a prayer* (German, *bitten*), hence the old expression for saying the English prayer before the sermon was, *bidding the beads*.

[3] It is generally supposed that the origin of the *curfew* was an enactment of William the Conqueror; but if Peshall (*Hist. of City of Oxford*, p. 177) is to be believed, it is of much earlier date. He says, 'The custom of ringing the bell at Carfax every night at eight o'clock (called *curfew bell*, or cover-fire bell) was *by order of King Alfred*, the restorer of our University,' &c. There are indications in Shakespeare (*Romeo and Juliet*, iv. 4), and in the local histories, that there were *two* bells, one at eight in the evening (properly called the *curfew*), and another at dawn, to which the name was improperly applied.

And eft he routeth, for his heed myslay.
Doun of the laddir stalketh Nicholay,
And Alisoun ful softe adoun hir spedde.
Withouten wordes mo they goon to bedde;
Ther as the carpenter was wont to lye,
Ther was the revel and the melodye.
And thus lith Alisoun and Nicholas,
In busynesse of myrthe and of solas,
Till that the belles of laudes[1] gan to rynge,
And freres in the chauncel gan to synge.
This parissch clerk, this amerous Absolon,
That is for love so harde and woo bygon,
Upon the Monday was at Osenay
With company, him to desporte and play;
And axed upon caas[2] a cloysterer
Ful pryvely after the carpenter;
And he drough him aparte out of the chirche,
And sayde, 'Nay, I say him nat here wirche
Syn Satirday: I trow that he be went
For tymber, ther our abbot hath him sent.
For he is wont for tymber for to goo,
And dwellen at the Graunge[3] a day or tuo.
Or elles he is at his hous certayn.
Wher that he be, I can nat sothly sayn.'
This Absolon ful joly was and light,
And thoughte, 'Now is tyme wake al night,
For sikerly I sawh him nought styryng
Aboute his dore, syn day bigan to spryng.

[1] *Lauds* was a short service sung immediately after *matins*, which last, in religious houses, began (or *ought* to have begun) to be sung at midnight, and could hardly have been concluded in less than two hours: allowing, therefore, a short interval for ringing the bells, the time indicated would be between two and three o'clock.

[2] By chance, as it were.

[3] *Grange* is a French word, meaning properly a barn, and was applied to outlying farms belonging to the abbeys. The manual labour on these farms was performed by an inferior class of monks, called *lay-brothers*, who were excused from many of the requirements of the monastic *rule* (see Fleury, *Eccles. Hist.*), but they were superintended by the monks themselves, who were allowed occasionally to spend some days at the Grange for this purpose.—See *Schipmanne's Tale*.

So mote I thryve, I schal at cokkes crowe
Ful pryvely go knokke at his wyndowe,
That stant ful lowe upon his bowres wal;
To Alisoun than wol I tellen al
My love-longyng; for yet I schal not mysse
That atte leste wey I schal hir kisse.
Som maner comfort schal I have, parfay!
My mouth hath icched al this longe day;
That is a signe of kissyng atte leste.
Al nyght I mette eek I was at a feste.
Therfore I wol go slepe an hour or tweye,
And al the night than wol I wake and pleye.'
Whan that the firste cok hath crowe, anoon
Up ryst this jolyf lover Absolon,
And him arrayeth gay, at poynt devys.
But first he cheweth greyn and lycoris,
To smellen swete, or he hadde kempt his heere.
Under his tunge a trewe love he beere,
For therby wende he to be gracious.
He rometh to the carpenteres hous,
And stille he stant under the schot wyndowe;
Unto his brest it raught, it was so lowe;
And softe he cowhith with a semysoun:
'What do ye, honycomb, swete Alisoun?
My fayre bryd, my swete cynamome,
Awake, lemman myn, and speketh to me.
Ful litel thynke ye upon my wo,
That for youre love I swelte ther I go.
No wonder is if that I swelte and swete,
I morne as doth a lamb after the tete.
I-wis, lemman, I have such love-longyng,
That like a turtil trewe is my moornyng.
I may not ete more than a mayde.'
'Go fro the wyndow, jakke fool,' sche sayde;
'As help me God, it wol not be, compame.'[1]
I love another, and elles were I to blame,

[1] *Compame* is used by poetic licence for *compaine*, companion, with the force of *friend*, or *neighbour*.

Wel bet than the, by Jhesu, Absolon.
Go forth thy wey, or I wol cast a stoon;
And let me slepe, a twenty devel way!'
'Allas!' quod Absolon, 'and weylaway!
That trewe love was ever so ylle bysett;
Thanne kisseth me, syn it may be no bett,
For Jesus love, and for the love of me.'
'Wilt thou than go thy wey therwith?' quod sche.
'Ye, certes, lemman,' quod this Absolon.
'Than mak the redy,' quod sche, 'I come anon.'
This Absolon doun sette him on his knees,
And seide, 'I am a lord at alle degrees;
For after this I hope ther cometh more;
Lemman, thy grace, and, swete bryd, thyn ore.'[1]
The wyndow sche undyd, and that in hast;
'Have doon,' quod sche, 'com of, and speed the fast,
Lest that our neyghebours the aspye.'
This Absolon gan wipe his mouth ful drye.
Derk was the night as picche or as a cole,
Out atte wyndow putte sche hir hole:
And Absolon hïm fel no bet ne wers,
But with his mouth he kist hir naked ers
Ful savorly. Whan he was war of this,
Abak he sterte, and thought it was amys,
For wel he wist a womman hath no berd.
He felt a thing al rough and long i-herd,
And seyde, 'Fy, allas! what have I do?'
'Te-hee!' quod sche, and clapt the wyndow to;
And Absolon goth forth a sory paas.
'A berd, a berd!' quod heende Nicholas;
'By Goddes corps, this game goth fair and wel.'
This seely Absolon herd every del,

[1] With thy favour. Thus, in a love song of the reign of Edward I., printed by Mr. Wright in his volume of *Lyric Poetry*, published by the Percy Society:—

'Ich haue loued al this yer that y may loue na more,
Ich haue siked moni syk, *lemmon, for thin ore.*'

And on his lippe he gan for angir byte;
And to himself he seyde, 'I schal the quyte.'
Who rubbith now, who froteth now his lippes
With dust, with sand, with straw, with cloth, with chippes,
But Absolon? that seith ful ofte, 'Allas,
My soule bytake I unto Sathanas!
But me were lever than alle this toun,' quod he,
'Of this dispit awroken for to be.
Allas?' quod he, 'allas! I nadde bleynt!'
His hoote love was cold, and al i-queint.
For fro that tyme that he had kist her ers,
Of paramours ne sette he nat a kers,
For he was helyd of his maledye;
Ful ofte paramours he gan deffye,
And wept as doth a child that is i-bete.
A soft paas went he over the strete
Unto a smyth, men clepith daun Gerveys,
That in his forge smythed plowh-harneys;
He scharpeth schar and cultre bysily.
This Absolon knokketh al esily,
And seyde, 'Undo, Gerveys, and that anoon.'
'What, who art thou?' 'It am I Absolon,'
'What? Absolon, what? Cristes swete tree!
Why ryse ye so rathe? *benedicite*,
What eyleth you? some gay gurl, God is woot,
Hath brought you thus upon the verytrot;
By seinte Noet![1] ye wot wel what I mene.'
This Absolon ne roughte nat a bene
Of al his pleye, no word agayn he gaf;
For he hadde more tow on his distaf[2]
Than Gerveys knew, and seyde, 'Freend so deere,
That hote cultre in the chymney heere

[1] St. Neot was a Saxon saint, and therefore appropriately invoked by the blacksmith.

[2] He had other business to think of. The same expression is used by Froissart, as quoted by Tyrwhitt—'*Il aura en bref temps autres estoupes en sa quenoille.*'

As lene it me, I have therwith to doone;
I wol it bring agayn to the ful soone.'
Gerveys answerde, 'Certes, were it gold,
Or in a poke nobles al untold,
Ye schul him have, as I am trewe smyth.
Ey, Cristes fote![1] what wil ye do therwith!'
'Therof,' quod Absolon, 'be as be may;
I schal wel telle it the to morwe day;'
And caughte the cultre by the colde stele.
Ful soft out at the dore he gan it stele,
And wente unto the carpenteres wal.
He cowheth first, and knokketh therwithal
Upon the wyndow, right as he dede er.
This Alisoun answerde, 'Who is ther
That knokketh so? I warant it a theef.'
'Why nay,' quod he, 'God woot, my sweete leef,
I am thyn Absolon, o my derlyng.
Of gold,' quod he, 'I have the brought a ryng;
My mooder gaf it me, so God me save!
Ful fyn it is, and therto wel i-grave;
This wol I give the, if thou me kisse.'
This Nicholas was rise for to pysse,
And thought he wold amenden al the jape,
He schulde kisse his ers or that he skape.
And up the wyndow dyde he hastily,
And out his ers putteth he pryvely
Over the buttok, to the haunche bon.
And therwith spak this clerk, this Absolon,
'Spek, sweete bryd, I wot nat wher thou art.'
This Nicholas anon let flee a fart,
As gret as it had ben a thundir dent,
And with that strook he was almost i-blent;
And he was redy with his yren hoot,
And Nicholas amid the ers he smoot.

[1] This strange profanity of swearing by different parts of the Redeemer's body has a counterpart in the devotions addressed to them. This particular oath may be considered appropriate to the blacksmith, part of whose business consisted in *shoeing* horses.

Of goth the skyn an hande-brede aboute,
The hoote cultre brente so his toute;
And for the smert he wende for to dye;
As he were wood, anon he gan to crye,
'Help, watir, watir, help, for Goddes herte!'
This carpenter out of his slumber sterte,
And herd on crye watir, as he wer wood,
And thought, 'Allas, now cometh Noes flood!'
He sit him up withoute wordes mo,
And with his ax he smot the corde a-two;
And doun he goth; he fond nowthir to selle[1]
No breed ne ale, til he com to the selle
Upon the floor, and ther aswoun he lay.
Up styrt hir Alisoun, and Nicholay,
And cryden, 'out and harrow!' in the strete.
The neyghebours bothe smal and grete,
In ronnen, for to gauren on this man,
That yet aswowne lay, bothe pale and wan;
For with the fal he brosten had his arm.
But stond he muste to his owne harm,
For whan he spak, he was anon born doun
With heende Nicholas and Alisoun.
They tolden every man that he was wood;
He was agast and feerd of Noes flood
Thurgh fantasie, that of his vanité
He hadde i-bought him knedyng tubbes thre,
And hadde hem hanged in the roof above;
And that he preyed hem for Goddes love
To sitten in the roof *par compaignye*.
The folk gan lawhen at his fantasye;
Into the roof they kyken, and they gape,
And torne al his harm into a jape.
For whatsoever the carpenter answerde,
It was for nought, no man his resoun herde,

[1] He found no business or advantage to stop him, till, &c. Tyrwhitt quotes a similar phrase from the *Fabliaux*, tom. ii., p. 282:—

'Ainc tant come il mist à descendre,
Ne trouva point de pain à vendre.'

With othis greet he was so sworn adoun,
That he was holden wood in al the toun.
For every clerk anon right heeld with othir;
They seyde, 'The man was wood, my leeve brother;'
And every man gan lawhen at his stryf.
Thus swyved was the carpenteres wyf
For al his kepyng and his gelousye;
And Absolon hath kist hir nethir ye;
And Nicholas is skaldid in his towte.
This tale is doon, and God save al the route.

THE PROLOGE OF THE REEVE.

WHAN folk hadde lawhen of this nyce caas
Of Absolon and heende Nicholas,
Dyverse folk dyversely they seyde,
But for the moste part they lowh and pleyde;
Ne at this tale I sawh no man him greve.
But it were oonly Osewald the Reeve.
Bycause he was of carpentrye craft,[1]
A litel ire in his herte is laft;
He gan to grucche and blamed it a lite.
'So theek,'[2] quod he, 'ful wel coude I the quyte
With bleryng of a prowd mylleres ye,[3]
If that me luste speke of ribaudye.
But yk am old; me list not pley for age;
Gras tyme is doon, my foddir is now forage.[4]

[1] There appears to have been a strong *esprit du corps* among fellow-craftsmen in the middle ages, arising from the necessity of combination for mutual protection at a time when the laws were weak. Hence the *guilds* and confraternities then so prevalent.

[2] Put for *so thee ich*, so may I thrive. *Ich*, which is also the German for I, is often used in Chaucer by the lower orders, who may be supposed to have retained most of the Saxon forms. It occurs again in other places.

[3] With a trick put upon a proud miller. To blear the eye is, literally, to make the sight dim; metaphorically, to cheat.

[4] My grass has become hay, a metaphor common in Scripture, as in Isaiah xl. 6.

My whyte top writeth myn olde yeeres;
Myn hert is al so moulyd as myn heeres;
But yit I fare as doth an open-ers;
That ilke fruyt is ever lenger the wers,
Til it be rote in mullok or in stree.
We olde men, I drede, so fare we,
Til we be roten, can we nat be rype;
We hoppen alway, whil the world wol pype;
For in oure wil ther stiketh ever a nayl,
To have an hoor heed and a greene tayl,[1]
As hath a leek; for though oure might be doon,
Oure wil desireth folye ever in oon;
For whan we may nat do, than wol we speke,
Yet in oure aisshen old is fyr i-reke.[2]
Foure gledys have we, which I schal devyse,
Avanting, lyyng, angur, coveytise.
This foure sparkys longen unto eelde.
Oure olde lymes mowen be unweelde,
But wil ne schal nat fayle us, that is soth.
And yet I have alwey a coltes toth,
As many a yeer as it is passed henne,
Syn that my tappe of lyf bygan to renne.
For sikirlik, whan I was born, anon
Deth drough the tappe of lyf,[3] and leet it goon;
And now so longe hath the tappe i-ronne,
Til that almost al empty is the tonne.
The streem of lyf now droppeth on the chymbe.[4]
The sely tonge may wel rynge and chimbe
Of wrecchednes, that passed is ful yoore:
With olde folk, sauf dotage, is no more.'

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[1] Boccaccio has the same allusion. *Dec.* Introd. to D. 4, 'Che il porro habbi il capo bianchi, che la coda sia verde.'

[2] Tyrwhitt remarks that this beautiful metaphor has been used in his *Elegy* by Gray, who, however, refers to the 169th Sonnet of Petrarch as his original.

[3] Another and more refined form of the thought occurs in the *Knightes Tale*:—

'That schapen was my deth erst than my scherte.'

[4] *Kime*, Teut., means the prominence of the staves beyond the head

Whan that oure Host had herd this sermonyng,
He gan to speke as lordly as a kyng,
And seyde, 'What amounteth al this wit?
What? schul we speke al day of holy wryt?
The devyl made a reve for to preche,
Or of a sowter a schipman or a leche.[1]
Sey forth thi tale, and tarye nat the tyme;
Lo heer is Depford, and it is passed prime;[2]
Lo Grenewich, ther many a schrewe is inne;[3]
It were al tyme thi tale to bygynne.'
'Now, sires,' quod this Osewold the Reeve,
'I pray yow alle, that noon of you him greeve,
Though I answere, and somwhat sette his howve,[4]
For leeful is with force force to showve.
This dronken Myllere hath i-tolde us heer,
How that bygiled was a carpenter,

---

of the barrel. The imagery is very exact and beautiful.—T. This word is still used in Norfolk and Suffolk.

[1] Probably an allusion to *Phædrus*, lib. i. fab. 14. Whence the proverb, *ex sutore medicus*. *Ex sutore nauclerus* is alluded to by Pynson, the printer, at the end of his edition of LITTLETON'S *Tenures*, 1525.

[2] The ecclesiastical day, which was also the civil in those ages when the Church was the fountain of knowledge and authority, was divided into portions, for each of which an office, consisting of psalms, metrical hymns, and prayers, was appointed to be said or sung. The first was *matins*, beginning at midnight; the next *prime*, at six in the morning; the next *tierce*, at nine; the next *sext*, at twelve; and the next *none*, at three; the next was vespers, or evensong, at six; and the last, before retiring to rest, was *compline*, or *completorium*. It would appear, however, from the fact that *noon* means twelve o'clock and not three, that time was usually counted by reckoning so much *before* each of these hours; as in the Roman Calendar, the days of the month are counted before the calends, ides, and nones, and are called pridie calendas, secunda calendas, meaning *ante* calendas. Thus, as soon as six o'clock, *prime*, was past, the time would be counted as so much before *tierce*; as soon as mid-day was past, it would be called *none* or noon. This is confirmed by the fact that in the *Shepherd's Almanac noon* is mid-day, *high* noon, three o'clock. For passed prime Tyrwhitt reads *half-way prime*, which is probably right; but he supposes it to mean half-way between prime and tierce, *scil.*, half-past seven, whereas it means that the middle of the period between matins and prime had arrived; for, the squyer, long afterwards, says:—

'I wol not tarien you, for it is prime.'

[3] Greenwich was apparently the Billingsgate of that time.

[4] *Set his hood*, meaning the same as set his cap. See *ante*, p. 101.

Peraventure in scorn, for I am oon;
And by your leve, I schal him quyte anoon.
Right in his cherles termes wol I speke;
I pray to God his nekke mot to-breke!
He can wel in myn eye see a stalke,
But in his owne he can nought seen a balke.'[1]

THE REEVES TALE.

[For the subject of this tale Tyrwhitt supposes that Chaucer was indebted to a *fabliau* printed in Barbazan under the title of *De Gombert et des Deux Clercs;* but Mr. Wright has since discovered and pointed out to notice in his *Anecdota Literaria* another *fabliau* on the same subject, which is more likely to have been the original. The fable was a favourite in the middle ages, and forms the basis of the sixth novel of the ninth day in Boccaccio's *Decameron;* but Chaucer's version is much superior to Boccaccio's, which is more licentious, and at the same time so bald, as to appear like the mere argument or heading of a chapter. The Reeve, who is represented as a 'choleric man,' certainly takes ample vengeance for the Miller's reflections on his trade. The poetical justice of the catastrophe is well preserved; Deynous Symekyn is punished in every particular in which he exhibited an overweening pride. He was a bully, and he is well beaten. He boasted of stealing the corn belonging to the college, and even the toll to which he is entitled is taken from him. He was elated by the high extraction of his wife and daughter, and in both points he is humbled; while his cunning expedient to overreach the two clerks, upon which he dwells with so much complacency, is the proximate cause of all his misfortunes. The sharpness of the clerks is characteristic of their country, the West Riding of 'canny Yorkshire.' It might at first be supposed that the fact of the miller's wife's being repre-

[1] An allusion to Matt. vii. 3.

sented as the daughter of a priest is an example, among many, of the hostility with which Chaucer regarded the clergy; but it seems more reasonable to suppose that he intended it to be understood that the priest was a widower, and that Simkin's wife was the issue of a marriage contracted before he took orders; otherwise the circumstances of her birth could hardly have been a subject of pride to her husband.]

AT Trompyngtoun, nat fer fro Cantebrigge,
Ther goth a brook, and over that a brigge,
Upon the whiche brook ther stant a melle:
And this is verray sothe that I you telle.
A meller was ther dwellyng many a day,
As eny pecok he was prowd and gay;
Pipen he coude, and fisshe, and nettys beete,
And turne cuppes, wrastle wel, and scheete.[1]
Ay by his belt he bar a long panade,
And of a swerd ful trenchaunt was the blade.
A joly popper bar he in his pouche;
Ther was no man for perel durst him touche.
A Scheffeld thwitel bar he in his hose.
Round was his face, and camois was his nose.
As pyled as an ape was his skulle.
He was a market-beter at the fulle.
Ther durste no wight hand upon him legge,
That he ne swor anon he schuld abegge.
A theef he was for soth of corn and mele,
And that a sleigh, and usyng for to stele.
His name was hoote deynous Symekyn.[2]
A wyf he hadde, come of noble kyn;

[1] The Miller's skill in fishing and mending nets is characteristic both of his trade and place of residence. *Bete* is still used in East Anglia for *repair*. Turning cups was probably a feat of dexterity. To *scheete* (German, *schiessen*), means, of course, to shoot with the long-bow, the redoubted weapon of the English yeoman.

[2] Disdainful Simon, of which *Simkin* is the diminutive. Tyrwhitt observes, that in the middle ages, and even to a comparatively late period, the lower orders had no surnames, the want of which was supplied by a name derived from some personal peculiarity. Hence the expression *nullius filius*, a man with no patronymic. The operatives

The persoun[1] of the toun hir fader was.
With hire he gaf ful many a panne of bras,
For that Symkyn schuld in his blood allye.
Sche was i-fostryd in a nonnerye;
For Symkyn wolde no wyf, as he sayde,
But sche were wel i-norissched and a mayde,
To saven his estaat and yomanrye.[2]
And sche was proud and pert as is a pye.
A ful fair sighte was ther on hem two;
On haly dayes bifore hir wold he go
With his typet y-bounde about his heed;
And sche cam aftir in a gyte of reed,
And Symkyn hadde hosen of the same.
Ther durst no wight clepe hir but *madame*,[3]
Was noon so hardy walkyng by the weye,
That with hir dorste rage or elles pleye,
But if he wold be slayn of Symekyn
With panade, or with knyf, or boydekyn;
For gelous folk ben perilous evermo,
Algate they wolde here wyves wende so.
And eek for sche was somdel smoterlich,
Sche was as deyne as water in a dich,[4]

---

and agricultural labourers in France are to this day known only by their baptismal names. When, after the late Revolution, the people elected one of their own number to sit in the National Assembly, having no surname, he was called simply *Albert Ouvrier*. It was usual to distinguish persons who had risen from a low origin, and consequently had no patronymic, by the place of their birth, as Matthew Paris, Thomas Aquinas, Thomas à Kempis. So, in the *Monkes Prologue*, the 'Host' had no idea of asking the Monk his surname:—

'Whether shall I calle you my lord dan Johan,
Or daun Thomas, or elles dan Albon.'

[1] It might at first be thought that this was a little bit of scandal about the clergy, but see introduction to this tale.

[2] To secure his standing in society as a yeoman.

[3] In the opening *Prologue*, the wives of the haberdasher and the other citizens are described as being proud of this title. It is still applied by the common people in Norfolk to untitled ladies.

[4] Tyrwhitt says the whole passage is obscure. 'As deyne as water in a dich,' seems to allude to some fable in which ditchwater showed unwarrantable pride, perhaps like the common one of the *Pot and the Kettle*. The meaning of the passage would then be, she was as haughty

As ful of hokir, and of bissemare.
Hir thoughte ladyes oughten hir to spare,[1]
What for hir kynreed and hir nortelrye,
That sche had lerned in the nonnerye.
O doughter hadden they betwix hem two,
Of twenti yeer, withouten eny mo,
Savyng a child that was of half yer age,
In cradil lay, and was a proper page.
This wenche thikke and wel i-growen was,
With camoys nose, and eyghen gray as glas;
And buttokkes brode, and brestes round and hye,
But right fair was hir heer, I wol nat lye.
The persoun of the toun, for sche was feir,
In purpos was to maken hir his heir,
Bothe of his catel and his mesuage,
And straunge made it of hir mariage.[2]
His purpos was to bystow hir hye
Into som worthy blood of ancetrye;
For holy chirche good moot be despendid
On holy chirche blood that is descendid.
Therfore he wolde his joly blood honoure,
Though that he schulde holy chirche devoure.[3]
Gret soken hath this meller, oute of doute,
With whete and malt, of al the londe aboute;
And namely ther was a gret collegge,
Men clepe it the Soler-halle[4] of Cantebregge,

---

and as full of mannerism and *bizarrerie* as the ditchwater in the fable; and, being dark and smutty, with as little reason.

[1] Ladies ought to treat her with consideration.

[2] Made it a matter of difficulty to obtain her in marriage.

[3] A satire on the clergy for enriching their families out of the ecclesiastical revenues.

[4] The hall with the soler. Before the students in the Universities were incorporated, they lived in lodging-houses, called inns, halls, and hostels, which were often distinguished by names taken from some peculiarity in their construction. One at Cambridge was called *Tyled Ostle*. And, at Oxford, Oriel College probably derives its name from a large messuage, vulgarly known by the name of *Le Oriele*, upon the site of which it stands. An *oriel* or *oriol* was a porch, as a *soler* seems originally to have signified an open gallery at the top of the house, though latterly it has been used for any upper room. FROISSART, vol. i.,

Ther was here whete and eek here malt i-grounde.
And on a day it happed in a stounde,
Syk lay the mauncyple on a maledye,
Men wenden wisly that he schulde dye;
For which this meller stal both mele and corn
A thousend part more than byforn.
For ther biforn he stal but curteysly;
But now he is a theef outrageously.
For which the wardeyn chidde and made fare,
But therof sette the meller not a tare;
He crakked boost, and swor it was nat so.
Thanne weren there poore scoleres tuo,
That dwelten in the halle of which I seye;
Testyf they were, and lusty for to pleye;
And, oonly for here mirthe and revelrye,
Uppon the wardeyn bysily they crye,
To geve hem leve but a litel stound
To go to melle and see here corn i-grounde;
And hardily they dursten ley here nekke,
The meller schuld nat stel hem half a pekke
Of corn by sleighte, ne by force hem reve.
And atte last the wardeyn gaf hem leve.
Johan hight that oon, and Alayn hight that other;
Of o toun were they born that highte Strothir,[1]
Fer in the North, I can nat telle where.
This Aleyn maketh redy al his gere,
And on an hors the sak he cast anoon:
Forth goth Aleyn the clerk, and also Jon,
With good swerd and with bocler by her side.
Johan knew the way, that hem needith no gyde;
And at the mylle the sak adoun he layth.
Alayn spak first: 'Al heil! Symond, in faith

---

c. 234, 'Les femmes de la ville monterent en leurs logis et en *soliers*.'—T. In Norfolk and Suffolk the loft in the church tower on which the ringers stand is called the *bell-soler*.—FORMBY'S *Vocabulary of East Anglia*.

[1] This was the valley of Langstroth, or Langstrothdale, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, as pointed out by Dr. Whitaker, *Hist. of Craven*, p. 493.—W. Any one who has lived in the West Riding will recognize the phraseology of the clerks as still used in that county.

How fares thy faire doughter and thy wyf?'
'Alayn, welcome,' quod Symond, 'by my lyf!
And Johan also; how now! what do ye here?'
'By God!' quod Johan, 'Symond, need has na peere.
Him falles[1] serve himself that has na swayn,
Or elles he is a fon, as clerkes sayn.
Our mancyple, as I hope,[2] wil be deed,
Swa werkes ay the wanges in his heed:
And therfore I is come, and eek Alayn,
To grynde oure corn, and carie it ham ageyn.
I prey you speed us in al that ye may.'
'It schal be doon,' quod Symkyn, 'by my fay!
What wol ye do whil that it is in hande?'
'By God! right by the hoper wol I stande,'
Quod Johan, 'and se how that the corn gas inne.
Yet sawh I never, by my fader kynne!
How that the hoper waggis to and fra.'
Aleyn answerde, 'Johan, and wiltow swa?
Than wol I be bynethe, by my croun!
And se how that the mele fallys doun
Into the trough, that schal be my desport;
For, Jon, in faith, I may be of your sort,
I is as ille a meller as ere ye.'
This mellere smyleth for here nyceté,

[1] It falls to his lot. Tyrwhitt and Speght read *behoves*.

[2] This is the vicious mode of speech called by the Greeks ακυρον. 'Such manner of uncouth speech did the Tanner of Tamworth use to King Edward IV.; which tanner having a great while mistaken him, and used very broad talk with him, at length, perceiving by his traine that it was the king, was afraid he should be punished for it, and said thus, with a certain rude repentance:—

'*I hope* I shall be hanged to-morrow,'

'for *I fear me* I shall be hanged; whereat the king laughed a good,' &c. —*Arte of English Poetry*. Tyrwhitt enumerates some of the peculiarities of these Yorkshiremen's phraseology:—1. They terminate the third person singular and the whole plural number in *es*, instead of *eth*, or *en*. 2. They use *a* in a great many words where Chaucer generally uses *o*, as *swa* for *so*, *hame* for *home*, *fra* for *from*, *banes* for *bones*, *anes* for *ones*, *ra* for *roe*. 3. Many of their words are in the obsolete Saxon form, as *henen* for *hens*, *whilke* (German, *welcher*) for *which*, *alswa* for *also*, and *gar* for *let* or *make*. And, finally, he makes them speak ungrammatically, as, 'I *is* as ille a meller as ere ye.'

And thought, 'Al this is doon but for a wyle;
They wenen that no man may hem bigile.
But, by my thrift, yet schal I blere here ye,[1]
For al here sleight and al here philosophie;
The more queynte knakkes that they make,
The more wol I stele whan I take.
In stede of mele, yet wol I give hem bren.
The grettest clerks beth not the wisest men,
As whilom to the wolf thus spak the mare;[2]
Of al her art ne counte I nat a tare.'
Out at the dore he goth ful pryvyly,
Whan that he saugh his tyme sotyly;
He loketh up and doun, til he hath founde
The clerkes hors, ther as it stood i-bounde
Behynde the mylle, under a levesel;
And to the hors he goth him faire and wel.
He strepeth of the bridel right anoon.
And whan the hors was loos, he gan to goon
Toward the fen there wilde mares renne, [thenne.
Forth with 'wi-he!'[3] thurgh thikke and eek thurgh
This meller goth agayn, and no word seyde,
But doth his note, and with the clerkes pleyde,
Til that her corn was fair and wel i-grounde.
And whan the mele was sakked and i-bounde,
This Johan goth out, and fynt his hors away,
And gan to crye, 'Harrow and weylaway!
Oure hors is lost! Aleyn, for Goddes banes,
Step on thy feet, cum on, man, al at anes.
Allas! our wardeyn hath his palfray lorn!'
This Aleyn al forgeteth mele and corn,

[1] See *ante*, p. 216, note 3.

[2] Mr. Wright says that the fable of the *Wolf and the Mare* is found in the early French of *Renard le Contrefait*, from whence it appears to have been taken into the English *Reynard the Fox*. Tyrwhitt says that the story alluded to is told of a mule, in the *Cento Nov. Antiche*, No. 91. The mule pretends that his name is written on the bottom of his hind-foot. The wolf attempting to read it, the mule gives him a kick on the forehead and kills him; upon which the fox observes, 'Ogni huomo che sa lettere non è savio.'

[3] Imitation of the sound of neighing.

Al was out of his mynd his housbondrye;
'What wikked way is he gan?' gan he crye.
The wyf cam lepyng in-ward with a ren,
Sche seyde, 'Allas! your hors goth to the fen
With wylde mares, as fast as he may go;
Unthank come on his heed that band him so,
And he that bettir schuld han knyt the reyne!'
'Allas!' quod Johan, 'Aleyn, for Cristes peyne!
Leg[1] doun thi swerd, and I sal myn alswa;
I is ful wight, God wat, as is a ra;
By Goddes hart! he sal nat scape us bathe.
Why nad thou put the capil in the lathe?
Il hail, Aleyn, by God! thou is a fon!'
This sely clerkes speeden hem anoon
Toward the fen, bothe Aleyn and eek Jon.
And when the myller sawh that they were gon,
He half a busshel of the flour hath take,
And bad his wyf go knede it in a cake.
He seyde, 'I trowe the clerkes ben aferd!
Yet can a miller make a clerkes berd,[2]
For al his art; ye, lat hem go here way!
Lo wher they goon! ye, lat the children play;
They get hym nat so lightly, by my croun!'
This seely clerkes ronnen up and doun, [derere!
With 'Keep! keep! stand! stand! jossa,[3] ware
Ga wightly thou, and I sal keep him heere.'
But schortly, til that it was verray night,
They cowde nat, though they did al here might,
Here capil cacche, it ran away so fast,
Til in a diche they caught him atte last.

---

[1] The obsolete Saxon form of *lay* (German, *legen*), as *lig* is of *lie*.

[2] Cheat him. *Faire la barbe* is the French for *to shave*, as *faire les ongles* is for *to cut the nails*; but Chaucer, when he uses the expression metaphorically, translates it literally.

[3] A word used to horses, meaning, apparently, 'stand still to be mounted;' for in East Anglia, the block of wood up to which the market horse used to be brought for the farmer's wife to mount her pillion from is called *the jostling* (meaning the mounting) *block*.

Wery and wete as bestys in the reyn,
Comth sely Johan, and with him comth Aleyn.
'Allas!' quod Johan, that day that I was born!
Now are we dryve til hethyng and to scorn.
Oure corn is stole, men woln us foles calle,
Bathe the wardeyn and eek our felaws alle,
And namely the myller, weyloway!'
Thus pleyneth Johan, as he goth by the way
Toward the mylle, and Bayard[1] in his hand.
The myller sittyng by the fyr he fand,
For it was night, and forther might they nought,
But for the love of God they him bisought
Of herberwh and of ese, as for her peny.[2]
The myller sayd agayn, 'If ther be eny,
Swich as it is, yit schul ye have your part.
Myn hous is streyt, but ye han lerned art;
Ye conne by argumentes make a place
A myl brood of twenty foote of space.
Let se now if this place may suffyse,
Or make it rom[3] with speche, as is your gyse.'
'Now, Symond,' seyde this Johan, 'by seynt Cuth-
Ay is thou mery, and that is fair answerd. [berd!'[4]
I have herd sey, men suld take of twa thinges,
Slik as he fynt, or tak slik as he bringes.
But specially I pray the, host ful deere,
Get us som mete and drynk, and mak us cheere,

---

[1] A common name for a bay horse, as *lyart* is for a grey.

[2] Besought him to give them lodging and entertainment, as they would pay for it.

[3] Make it *roomier*, more spacious. Speght reads *romer*, but this spoils the metre.

[4] Johan appropriately swears by St. Cuthbert, a saint held in great reverence in the North of England. He retired to the 'semi-island' of Lindisfarne, as Bede calls it, where the remains of a monastery of great antiquity still exist; and his body after his death, in the year 686, was interred finally somewhere near Durham, after it had been removed to various places, on account of the incursions of the Danes; but the actual place of his sepulture is said to be kept secret by the Roman Catholics.—See notes to *Marmion*.

And we wol paye trewely at the fulle;
With empty hand men may na hawkes tulle.[1]
Lo heer our silver redy for to spende.'
This meller into toun his doughter sende
For ale and breed, and rosted hem a goos,
And band her hors, he schold no more go loos;
And in his owne chambir hem made a bed,
With schetys and with chalouns fair i-spred,
Nat from his owen bed ten foot or twelve.
His doughter had a bed al by hirselve,
Right in the same chambre by and by;
It mighte be no bet, and cause why
Ther was no rommer herberw in the place.
They sowpen, and they speken of solace,
And dronken ever strong ale atte beste.
Aboute mydnyght wente they to reste.
Wel hath the myller vernysshed his heed,
Ful pale he was for dronken,[2] and nat reed;
He yoxeth, and he speketh thurgh the nose,
As he were on the quakke or on the pose.
To bed he goth, and with him goth his wyf,
As eny jay sche light was and jolyf,
So was hir joly whistel wel y-wet,[3]
The cradil at hire beddes feet is set,

---

[1] To lure, a term of falconry. As few people now-a-days have an opportunity of witnessing this sport, it may be mentioned, that, when the falcon is thrown off, she flies round the falconer in circles, which she continually enlarges till she is out of sight. This is called 'waiting on.' When she has got sufficiently distant, the game is flushed, and she immediately darts at it. To recal her when the circles become too wide, he throws up a piece of wood, with the wings of a bird fixed on it, and attached to a string; this piece of wood is called the *lure* or *tulle*. Without this lure, says Johan, a falconer cannot recal his falcon. *Tulle* appears to be the northern word for *lure*, for the *Wyf of Bathe* says:—

'With empty hand man may noon hawkes *lure*.'

It occurs in the ballad of *Kynge Estmere*:—

'For an thou playest as thou beginnest,
Thou'lt *till* my bride awaye.'

[2] He was all pale for drunkenness. See *ante*, p. 188, note 2.

[3] To wet the whistle is still a vulgar expression for *to drink*.

To rokken, and to give the child to souke.
And whan that dronken was al in the crouke,
To bedde went the doughter right anon;
To bedde goth Aleyn, and also Jon,
Ther nas no more, him needeth no dwale.
This meller hath so wysly bibbed ale,
That as an hors he snortith in his sleep,
Ne of his tayl bihynd took he no keep.
His wyf bar him a burdoun, a ful strong,
Men might her rowtyng heeren a forlong.
The wenche routeth eek *par companye*.
Aleyn the clerk, that herd this melodye,
He pokyd Johan, and seyde, 'Slepistow?
Herdistow ever slik a sang er now?
Lo, slik a conplyng is betwix hem alle,
A wilde fyr upon thair bodyes falle!
Wha herkned ever swilk a ferly[1] thing?
Ye, thei sul have the flour of ille endyng!
This lange night ther tydes me na rest.
But yet na fors, al sal be for the best.
For, Johan,' sayd he, 'as ever mot I thryve,
If that I may, yone wenche sal I swyve.
Som esement hath lawe schapen us;
For Johan, ther is a lawe that says thus,
That if a man in a point be agreved,
That in another he sal be releeved.[2]
Oure corn is stoln, sothly, it is na nay,
And we have had an ylle fitt to day;
And syn I sal have nan amendement
Agayn my los, I wol have esement.
By Goddes sale! it sal nan other be.'

---

[1] A northern word, meaning *marvellous*, and sometimes applied to a fairy, as a marvel, or marvellous object. Thus, in *Thomas the Rhymer*:—

'True Thomas lay on Huntlie bank,
A *ferlie* he spied wi' his ee.'

[2] A marginal note in the MS. says, 'Qui in uno gravatur, in alio debet relevari.'—W. Whence this maxim of law is taken does not appear.

This Johan answerd, 'Aleyn, avyse the;
The miller is a perlous man,' he sayde,
'And if that he out of his sleep abrayde,
He mighte do us bothe a vilonye.'
Aleyn answerd, 'I count it nat a flye!'
And up he roos, and by the wenche he crepte.
This wenche lay upright and faste slepte,
Til he so neih was or sche might aspye
That it had ben to late for to crye.
And schortly for to seye, they weren at oon.
Now pley, Alein, for I wol speke of Jon.
This Johan lith stille a forlong whyle or two,
And to himself compleyned of his woo.
'Allas!' quod he, 'this is a wikked jape;
Now may I say that I am but an ape.
Yet hath my felaw somwhat for his harm;
He hath the myllers doughter in his arm;
He auntred him, and has his needes sped,
And I lye as a draf-sak in my bed;
And when this jape is tald another day,
I sal be held a daf, a cokenay.[1]

[1] That this is a term of contempt, borrowed originally from the kitchen, is very probable.—T. He shows from several passages in old authors that it sometimes meant simply a cook. But in the sense in which it is here used, it probably means an inhabitant of that lubberland so humorously described in the satire quoted from Hickes by Warton, and beginning—

'Fur in see, by West Spagne,
Is a lond ihote Cokagne
* * * * *
Al of pastees beth the wallis,
Of fleis, of fisse, and rich met,
The likefullist that man may et.'

Cockayne is well known in nurseries, where it is described as a city whose 'streets are paved with penny loaves, and whose houses are thatched with pancakes, and in which the pigs run about with knives and forks stuck in their backs, crying, 'Who'll eat me.'' To this, no doubt, Hugh Bigod alluded in the lines given by Camden, *Brit.* 467:—

'Were I in my castle of Bungay,
Upon the river of Waveney,
I would ne care for the King of Cockeney.'

It occurs also in the *Romance of Merlin*, Part II., in an address of King

Unhardy is unsely, as men saith.[1]
I wol arise, and auntre it, in good faith.'
And up he ros, and softely he wente
Unto the cradil, and in his hand it hente,
And bar it softe unto his beddis feet.
Soone after this the wyf hir routyng leet,
And gan awake, and went hir forth to pisse,
And cam agayn, and gan hir cradel mysse,
And groped heer and ther, but sche fond noon.
'Allas!' quod sche, 'I had almost mysgoon;
I had almost goon to the clerkes bed,
Ey, *benedicite!* than had I foule i-sped!'
And forth sche goth, til sche the cradil fand.
Sche gropith alway forther with hir hand,
And fand the bed, and thoughte nat but good,
Bycause that the cradil by it stood,
Nat knowyng wher sche was, for it was derk;
But faire and wel sche creep in to the clerk,
And lith ful stille, and wolde han caught a sleep.
Withinne a while Johan the clerk up leep,
And on this goode wyf leyth on ful sore;
So mery a fytt ne hadd sche nat ful yore.
He priketh harde and deepe, as he were mad.
This joly lyf han this twey clerkes had,
Til that the thridde cok[2] bygan to synge.
Aleyn wax wery in the dawenynge,

Arthur to a Saracen, with whom he is about to fight. Mr. Wright is inclined to think that the term *Cockney* is a diminutive of *cock*, and that its first meaning is a puny fellow, and that Chaucer uses it here in the sense of want of spirit and courage, without intending any allusion to Cockayne.

[1] The more modern form of the proverb is, 'Nothing venture, nothing have.'

[2] The time indicated is shortly before dawn. The cock was supposed to crow at three stated hours. Tusser, in the *Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry*, 1585, p. 126, says:—

'Cocke croweth at midnight times few above six,
With pause to his neighbour to answer betwix.
At three o'clock thicker; and then, as ye knowe,
Like 'all in to mattins,' neere day they doo crowe.
At midnight, at three, and an hour yer day,
They utter their language as well as they may.'

For he had swonken al the longe night,
And seyd, 'Farwel, Malyn,[1] my sweete wight!
The day is come, I may no lenger byde;
But evermo, wher so I go or ryde,
I am thin owen clerk, so have I seel!'
'Now, deere lemman,' quod sche, 'go, farwel!
But or thou go, o thing I wol the telle:
Whan that thou wendist hom-ward by the melle,
Right at the entré of the dore byhynde
Thou schalt a cake of half a busshel fynde,
That was i-maked of thyn owen mele,
Which that I hilp myn owen self to stele.
And, goode lemman, God the save and kepe!'
And with that word almost sche gan to weepe.
Aleyn uprist, and thought, 'Er that it dawe
I wol go crepen in by my felawe;'
And fand the cradil with his hand anon.
'By God!' thought he, 'al wrong I have i-goon;
My heed is toty of my swynk to nyght,
That makes me that I ga nought aright.
I wot wel by the cradel I have mysgo;
Heer lith the myller and his wyf also.'
Forth he goth in twenty devel way
Unto the bed, ther as the miller lay.
He wende have crope by his felaw Jon,
And by the myller in he creep anon,
And caught him by the nekke, and soft he spak,
And seyde, 'Jon, thou swyneshed, awak,
For Cristes sowle! and here a noble game;
For, by that lord that cleped is seynt Jame,
As I have thries in this schorte night
Swyved the myllers doughter bolt upright,

So in *Lear*:—

'He begins at curfew, and walks till the *first cock*.'

And in *Macbeth*:—

'We were carousing till the *second cock*.'

[1] Malyn, or Malkin, appears to be an endearing, or familiar, name for Mary, like the modern Molly.

Whiles thou hast as a coward ben agast.'
'Ye, false harlot,' quod this mellere, 'hast?
A! false traitour, false clerk!' quod he,
'Thou schalt be deed, by Goddes dignité!
Who durste be so bold to disparage
My doughter, that is com of hih lynage?'
And by the throte-bolle he caught Aleyn,
And he hent him dispitously ageyn,
And on the nose he smot him with his fest.
Doun ran the blody streem upon his brest;
And in the floor with nose and mouth to-broke
They walweden as pigges in a poke;
And up they goon, and doun they goon anon,
Till that the millner stumbled at a ston,
And doun he felle bakward on his wyf,
That wyste nothing of this nyce stryf;
For sche was falle asleepe a litel wight
With Jon the clerk, that waked al the night,
And with the falle right out of slepe sche brayde.
'Help, holy croys of Bromholme!'[1] sche sayde,
'*In manus tuas*,[2] Lord, to the I calle!
Awake, Symond, the feend is in thin halle!
My hert is broken! help! I am but deed!
Ther lythe[3] upon my wombe and on myn heed.

---

[1] Mr. Wright says that a portion of the true cross was supposed to be preserved in a reliquary, in the form of a cross, belonging to the Priory of Bromholme, in Norfolk. It was brought to England, with great ceremony, in 1223, and thenceforward became an object of pilgrimage. 'By the cross (or rood) of Bromholme,' was a common oath.

[2] 'In manus tuas, commendo spiritum meum,' were the last words of our Saviour on the cross, appropriately used in any sudden danger. In the notes to *Marmion* is an account of the death of a hermit. He exclaims, 'My soul longeth for the Lord, . . *In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum*, a vinculis enim mortis redemisti me, Domine veritatis. Amen. So he yielded up the ghost the eighth day of December, anno Domini 1159, whose soul God have mercy upon. Amen.' The miller's wife, having been brought up in a convent, is supposed to have learned to say her prayers in Latin, these words forming one of the responses for *compline*.

[3] The word *one* is supplied here by Speght and Tyrwhitt, but it spoils the metre, and is unnecessary. *Ther lythe* means *something lies*.

Help, Symkyn! for this false clerkes fight.'
This Johan stert up as fast as ever he might,
And grasped by the walles to and fro,
To fynde a staf; and sche sturt up also,
And knewe the estres bet than dede Jon,
And by the wal sche took a staf anon,
And sawh a litel glymeryng of a light;
For at an hool in schon the moone bright,
And by that light she saugh hem bothe two;
But sikirly sche wiste nat who was who,
But as sche saugh a whit thing in hir ye.
And whan sche gan this white thing aspye,
Sche wend the clerk had wered a volupeer;
And with a staf sche drough hir neer and neer,
And wend have hit this Aleyn atte fulle,
And smot this meller on the piled sculle,
That doun he goth, and cryeth, 'Harrow! I dye!'
This clerkes beeten him wel, and leet hym lye,
And greyth hem wel, and take her hors anon,
And eek here mele, and hoom anon they goon;
And at the millen dore they tok here cake
Of half a buisshel flour ful wel i-bake.
Thus is the prowde miller wel i-bete,
And hath i-lost the gryndyng of the whete,
And payed for the soper every del
Of Aleyn and of Johan, that beten him wel;
His wyf is swyved, and his doughter als.
Lo! such it is a miller to be fals.
And therto this proverbe is seyd ful soth,
He thar nat weene[1] wel that evyl doth.
A gylour schal himself bygiled be.
And God, that sitest in thy magesté,
Save al this compaignie, gret and smale,
Thus have I quyt the miller in his tale.

[1] For *weene* Tyrwhitt substitutes *winne*, on his own authority. The meaning is, 'It behoves not him to win or acquire good, or (if we read *weene*) to expect good, who doeth evil.'

THE COKES PROLOGE.

THE Cook of Londone, whil the Reeve spak,
For joye he thought he clawed him on the bak;[1]
'Ha, ha!' quod he, 'for Cristes passioun,
This meller hath a scharp conclusioun
Upon his argument of herburgage.
Wel seyde Salomon in his langage,
Ne bryng nat every man into thyn hous,[2]
For herburgage by night is perilous.
Wel aught a man avised for to be
Whom that he brought into his pryvyté.
I pray to God so gyf my body care,
Gif ever, siththen I highte Hogge of Ware,
Herd I a better miller set a-werke;
He hadde a jape of malice in the derke.
But God forbede that we stynten heere,
And therfore if ye vouchesauf to heere
A tale of me that am a pover man,
I wol yow telle as wel as I kan
A litel jape that fel in oure cité.'
Oure Host answerde and seyde, 'I graunt it the.
Now telle on, Roger, and loke it be good;
For many a pastey hastow lete blood,
And many a Jakk of Dover[3] hastow sold,
That hath be twyes hoot and twyes cold.
Of many a pylgrym hastow Cristes curs;
For thy persly they faren yet the wors,
That they have eten with the stubbil goos;
For in thy schoppe is many a flye loos.
Now tell on, gentil Roger by thy name,
But yit I pray the be nought wroth for game;

---

[1] For the joy he experienced in his mind, he could scarcely forbear clapping the reeve on the back.

[2] Ecclus. xi. 31.

[3] Tyrwhitt does not understand this line. *Jack* means the fish called *pike* or *luce*, and Dover may have been celebrated for them.

A man may seye ful sothe in game and pley.'[1]
'Thow saist ful soth,' quod Roger, 'by my fey!
But soth play quad play, as the Flemyng saith;[2]
And therfore, Herry Baillif, by thy faith,
Be thou nat wroth, or we departe her,
Though that my tale be of an hostyler.
But natheles I wol not telle it yit,
But or we departe it schal be quyt.'
And therwithal he lowh and made chere,
And seyde his tale, as ye schal after heere.

THE COKES TALE.

A PRENTYS dwelled whilom in oure citee,
And of a craft of vitaillers was he;
Gaylard he was, as goldfynch in the schawe,
Broun as a bery, and a propre felawe,
With lokkes blak, and kempt ful fetously.
Dauncen he cowde wel and prately,
That he was cleped Perkyn Revellour.[3]
He was as ful of love and paramour
As is the honycombe of hony swete;
Wel were the wenche that mighte him meete.
At every bridale wold he synge and hoppe;[4]
He loved bet the taverne than the schoppe.
For whan ther eny rydyng was in Cheepe,[5]
Out of the schoppe thider wolde he lepe,
And tyl he hadde al that sight i-seyn,
And daunced wel, he nold nat come ageyn;

[1] This line, as well as the next but two, is omitted in MS. Harl., which reads *by my faith* in the ensuing line, to make it rhyme with that which follows.—W.

[2] Play in earnest is bad play. Tyrwhitt quotes Sir John Harrington to the same purpose—'Soth bourde is no bourde.'

[3] See *ante*, p. 220, note 2.

[4] This and the following line are omitted in MS. Harl.—W.

[5] There were sometimes justs in Cheapside.—Holingshed, vol. ii. p. 348. But perhaps any procession may be meant.—T.

And gadred him a meyné of his sort,
To hoppe and synge, and make such disport.
And ther they setten stevene for to meete,
To pleyen atte dys in such a strete,
For in the toun ne was ther no prentys
That fairer cowde caste a peyre dys
Than Perkyn couthe, and therto he was free
Of his dispence, in place of pryvyté.
That fand his mayster wel in his chaffare,
For often tyme he fond his box ful bare.
For such a joly prentys revelour,
That haunteth dys, revel, or paramour,
His maister schal it in his schoppe abye,
Al have he no part of the mynstralcye.
For thefte and ryot be convertyble,
Al can they pley on giterne or rubible.
Revel and trouthe, as in a lowe degré,
They ben ful wroth al day,[1] as ye may see.
This joly prentys with his mayster bood,
Til he was oute neygh of his prentyshood,
Al were he snybbyd bothe erly and late,
And som tyme lad with revel into Newgate.
But atte laste his mayster him bythought
Upon a day, whan he his papyr[2] sought,
Of a proverbe, that saith this same word,
Wel bette is roten appul out of hord,
Than that it rote al the remenaunt.
So fareth it by a ryotous servaunt;
It is ful lasse harm to late him pace,
Than he schend al the servauntes in the place.
Therfore his mayster gaf him acquitaunce,[3]
And bad him go, with sorwe and with meschaunce.

[1] The meaning is not obvious. It may be, theft and riot are convertible terms (always accompany one another), however pleasant and gay they may appear outwardly; while, on the other hand, revelry and truth (or honesty) are every day seen to be at enmity, particularly in persons of low degree, who have not the means of maintaining the expense.

[2] His account books. [3] The MS. Harl. reads *acqueyntaunce*.—W.

And thus the joly prentys had his leve.
Now let hym ryot al the night or leve.
And for ther is no thef withowten a lowke,
[1]That helpeth him to wasten and to sowke
Of that he bribe can, or borwe may,
Anon he sent his bedde and his aray
Unto a compere of his owen sort,
That loved dis, and revel, and disport;
And had a wyf, that held for contenaunce[2]
A schoppe, and swyved for hire sustenaunce.[3]

[Fye theron, it is so foule, I wil nowe telle no forther,
For schame of the harlotrie that seweth after;
A velany it were thare of more to spelle,
Bot of a knyht and his sonnes my tale I wil forthe telle.]

THE COKES TALE OF GAMELYN.

[In the Harleian and other good MSS., the tale of Gamelyn is inserted in this place; and it is retained in this edition as a curious specimen of a species of composition long popular among the Anglo-Saxon peasantry. In such rude ballads as this, it was their delight to celebrate the prowess of their outlawed countrymen, who, in the fastnesses of the extensive forests which then covered the northern parts of the island, set at nought the authority of their Norman conquerors, bid defiance to the odious forest laws, and wreaked their vengeance upon the Norman prelates who had been intruded into the sees and abbeys in the place of the rightful Saxon occupants. To this

[1] The last seven lines are omitted in MS. Harl., but they are evidently genuine.—W.

[2] As a blind to save appearances.

[3] Here *The Cokes Tale* ends abruptly. It seems probable, as Tyrwhitt supposes, that Chaucer's more mature judgment convinced him that two such tales as the Miller's and the Reeve's were sufficient at a time; and that he intended to cancel the Coke's prologue and tale, and to proceed at once to *The Man of Lawes Prologue*.

national feeling is to be attributed the extraordinary popularity of Robin Hood, Adam Bell, Clym of the Clough, and other bold outlaws of the same stamp, among whom must be classed Gamelyn. Indeed, he is associated, under the name of 'young Gamwel,' with the heroic Earl of Huntingdon, in the ballad of *Robin Hood and the Stranger*, in Ritson's collection. In all these poems the grand merit of the hero is his daring contempt of the law, a trait by no means characteristic of the Saxons, but the result of their peculiar position as a brave and powerful, though conquered, people, governed by a foreign aristocracy.

The verse of this tale is that of the other spurious pieces which have been interpolated to supply deficiencies in *The Canterbury Tales*, and is never used by Chaucer. It is extremely irregular, but the rhythm or cadence resembles that of the verse much used by Surrey, and is obtained by employing an equal number of accented syllables in every line, while the unaccented ones are added or omitted, almost *ad libitum;* and by making an unvarying pause or *cæsura* at the middle of every verse.

Though possessed of great merit, and displaying much of the quaint humour so congenial to the English mind, this tale has none of the characteristics of Chaucer's manner; and the fact that when the host of the Tabard, in the prologue to *The Manciple's Tale*, calls upon the cook to perform his part of the agreement, he makes no reference to his having already told a tale, is decisive against its genuineness. If a conjecture may be hazarded, it seems not improbable that the poet had selected it to form the groundwork of a tale which he intended to put into the mouth of the yeoman or some other of his lower personages; and that, being found among his loose papers after his death, it was here introduced to fill a vacant space, by the person who arranged the tales in their present order. If this be so, it is a curious fact that Chaucer's great successor should have confirmed his judgment of its capabilities by selecting it as the foundation of the comedy of *As you Like it*.]

LITHETH, and lestneth, and herkneth aright,
And ye schul heere a talkyng of a doughty knight;
Sire Johan of Boundys was his right name,
He cowde of norture ynough and mochil of game,
Thre sones the knight had, that with his body he wan;
The eldest was a moche schrewe, and sone he bygan.[1]
His bretheren loved wel here fader, and of him were agast,
The eldest deserved his fadres curs, and had it at the last.
The goode knight his fader lyvede so yore,
That deth was comen him to, and handled him ful sore.
The goode knight cared sore, sik ther he lay,
How his children scholde lyven after his day.
He hadde ben wyde wher, but non housbond he was,
Al the lond that he had, it was verre purchas.[2]
Fayn he wold it were dressed amonges hem alle,
That ech of hem had his part, as it mighte falle.
Tho sent he into cuntre after wise knightes,
To helpe delen his londes and dressen hem to rightes.
He sent hem word by lettres they schulden hye blyve,
Yf they wolde speke with him whil he was on lyve.
Tho the knyghtes herden sik ther he lay,
Hadde they no reste nother night ne day,
Til they comen to him ther he lay stille
On his deth bedde, to abyde Goddes wille.
Than seyde the goode knight, syk ther he lay,
'Lordes, I you warne for soth, withoute nay,
I may no lengere lyven heer in this stounde;
For thurgh Goddes wille deth draweth me to grounde.'
Ther nas non of hem alle that herd him aright,
That they hadden reuthe of that ilke knight,

[1] Soon he began to show it.

[2] This appears to mean, that the knight had himself acquired his land, and held it in fee simple (verre purchas), not entailed nor settled; and that, consequently, he had a right to divide it among his children as he pleased. The housbond in this case means a man who was kept at home looking after his domestic business and his estates, and who could not be 'wyde wher.'

And seyde, 'Sir, for Goddes love, ne dismay you nought;
God may do bote of bale[1] that is now i-wrought.'
Than spak the goode knight, sik ther he lay,
'Boote of bale God may sende, I wot it is no nay;
But I byseke you, knightes, for the love of me,
Goth and dresseth my lond among my sones thre.
And, sires, for the love of God, deleth hem nat amys,
And forgetith nat Gamelyn, my yonge sone that is.
Taketh heed to that on, as wel as to that other;
Selde ye see ony eyr helpen his brother.'
Tho leete they the knight lyen that was nought in hele,
And wenten in to counseil his londes for to dele;
For to delen hem alle to oon, that was her thought,
And for Gamelyn was yongest, he should have nought.
Al the lond that ther was they dalten it in two,
And leeten Gamelyn the yonge withoute lond go,
And ech of hem seyde to other ful lowde, [cowde.[2]
His bretheren might geve him lond whan he good
Whan they hadde deled the lond at here wille,
They come agein to the knight ther he lay fulstille,
And tolden him anon right how they hadden wrought;
And the knight there he lay liked it right nought.
Than seyde the knight, 'I sware by seynt Martyn,[3]
For al that ye have y-doon yit is the lond myn;

---

1 God may bring good out of evil. This is a very usual expression in the ballads of the school of Robin Hood. Thus, in *Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne*, when Little John's bow breaks, as he is about to shoot at the Sheriff of Nottingham, he exclaims:—

'Woe worth, woe worth thee, wicked wood,
That ever thou grew on a tree!
For now this day thou art *my bale*,
My boote when thou shold be.'

2 When he should be of age to know what was right.

3 Saint Martin was a Hungarian by birth, and served in the army under Constantius and Julian. He is represented in pictures as a Roman knight on horseback, with his sword dividing his cloak into two pieces, one of which he gives to a beggar. He was a strenuous opponent of the Arians, and died at Tours, where his relics were preserved and honoured.

For Goddes love, neyhebours, stondeth alle stille,
And I wil dele my lond after my wille.
Johan, myn eldeste sone, shall have plowes[1] fyve,
That was my fadres heritage whil he was on lyve;
And my myddeleste sone fyf plowes of lond,
That I halp for to gete with my right hond;
And al myn other purchas of londes and leedes
That I byquethe Gamelyn, and alle my goode steedes.
And I byseke yow, goode men, that lawe conne of londe,
For Gamelynes love, that my queste stonde.'
Thus dalte the knight his lond by his day,
Right on his deth bed sik ther he lay;
And sone aftirward he lay stoon stille,
And deyde whan tyme com, as it was Cristes wille.
And anon as he was deed, and under gras i-grave,
Sone the elder brother gyled the yonge knave,[2]
He took into his hond his lond and his leede,
And Gamelyn himselfe to clothen and to feede.
He clothed him and fed him yvel and eek wrothe,
And leet his londes for-fare and his houses bothe,
His parkes and his woodes, and dede nothing wel,
And seththen he it abought on his faire fel.[3]
So longe was Gamelyn in his brotheres halle,
For the strengest of good wil they doutiden him alle;
Ther was non therinne nowther yong ne olde
That wolde wraththe Gamelyn, were he never so bolde.
Gamelyn stood on a day in his brotheres yerde,
And bygan with his hond to handlen his berde;[4]
He thought on his londes that layen unsawe,
And his faire okes that doun were i-drawe;
His parkes were i-broken, and his deer byreeved;
Of alle his goode steedes noon was him byleved;

---

[1] Meaning a *plough-land*, a common mode of measurement down to the reigns of Elizabeth and James the First.

[2] German, *knabe*, boy.

[3] He paid or suffered for it on his own head.

[4] His growing beard reminded him that he was come to man's estate, and suggested the thoughts which follow.

His howses were unhilid and ful yvel dight.
Tho thoughte Gamelyn it wente nought aright.
Afterward cam his brother walkynge thare,
And seyde to Gamelyn, 'Is our mete yare?'
Tho wraththed him Gamelyn, and swor by Goddes book,
'Thou shalt go bake thiself, I wil nought be thy cook.'
'How? brother Gamelyn, how answerest thou now?
Thou spake never such a word as thou dost now.'
'By my faith,' seyde Gamelyn, 'now me thinketh
neede,
Of alle the harmes that I have I tok never ar heede.
My parkes ben to-broken, and my deer byreved,
Of myn armure and my steedes nought is me bileved;
Al that my fader me byquath al goth to schame,
And therfor have thou Goddes curs, brother, by thy
name.'
Than byspak his brother, that rape was of rees,[1]
'Stond stille, gadelyng, and hold right thy pees;
Thow schalt be fayn for to have thy mete and thy
wede;
What spekest thou, Gamelyn, of lond other of leede?'
Thanne seyde Gamelyn, the child[2] that was ying,
'Cristes curs mot he have that clepeth me gadelyng!
I am no worse gadelyng, ne no worse wight,
But born of a lady, and geten of a knight.'
Ne durst he nat to Gamelyn ner a foote go,
But clepide to him his men, and seyde to hem tho,
'Goth and beteth this boy, and reveth him his wyt,
And lat him leren another tyme to answere me bet.'
Thanne seyde the child, yonge Gamelyn,
'Cristes curs mot thou have, brother art thou myn;
And if I schal algate be beten anon,
Cristes curs mot thou have, but thou be that oon.'
And anon his brother in that grete hete
Made his men to fette staves Gamelyn to bete.
Whan that everich of hem a staf had i-nome,
Gamelyn was war anon tho he seigh hem come;

[1] Deprived of reason for anger. [2] See *ante*, p. 197, note 3.

Tho Gamelyn seyh hem come, he loked over al,
And was war of a pestel stood under a wal;
Gamelyn was light of foot and thi der gan helepe,
And drof alle his brotheres men right on an hepe.
He loked as a wilde lyoun, and leyde on good woon;
Tho his brother say that, he bigan to goon;
He fley up intil a loft, and schette the dore fast.
Thus Gamelyn with the pestel made hem alle agast.
Some for Gamelynes love and some for his eyghe,
Alle they drowe by halves, tho he gan to pleyghe.
'What! how now?' seyde Gamelyn, 'evel mot ye thee!
Wil ye bygynne contek, and so sone flee?'
Gamelyn sought his brother, whider he was flowe,
And saugh wher he loked out at a wyndowe.
'Brother,' sayde Gamelyn, 'com a litel ner,
And I wil teche the a play atte bokeler.'
His brother him answerde, and swor by seynt Rycher,[1]
'Whil the pestel is in thin hond, I wil come no neer:
Brother, I wil make thy pees, I swere by Cristes ore;
Cast away the pestel, and wraththe the nomore.'
'I mot neede,' sayde Gamelyn, 'wraththe me at oones,
For thou wolde make thy men to breke myne boones,
Ne had I hadde mayn and might in myn armes,
To have i-put hem fro me, he wolde have do me harmes.'
'Gamelyn,' sayde his brother, 'be thou nought wroth,
For to seen the have harm it were me right loth;
I ne dide it nought, brother, but for a fondyng,
For to loken or thou were strong and art so ying.'
'Com adoun than to me, and graunte me my bone,
Of thing I wil the aske, and we schul saught sone.'
Doun than cam his brother, that fykil was and felle,
And was swithe sore agast of the pestelle.

[1] 'By Saint Richard,' was a favourite oath with the outlaws of Robin Hood's stamp, probably because of his Saxon extraction. 'Saint Richard, King and Confessor, was sonne to Lotharius, King of Kent, who, for the love of Christ, taking upon him a long peregrination, went to Rome for devotion to that sea (see), and, on his way homeward, died at Lucca, about the year of Christ 750, where his body is kept until this day, with great veneration, in the oratory and chappell of St. Frigidian, and adorned with an epitaph both in verse and prose.'—*Eng. Martyrologye*, 1608.

He seyde, 'Brother Gamelyn, aske me thy boone,
And loke thou me blame but I graunte sone.'
Thanne seyde Gamelyn, 'Brother, i-wys,
And we schulle ben at oon, thou most me graunte this,
Al that my fader me byquath whil he was on lyve,
Thou most do me it have, gif we schul nat stryve.'
'That schalt thou have, Gamelyn, I swere by Cristes ore! [have more;
Al that thi fader the byquath, though thou woldest
Thy lond, that lyth laye, ful wel it schal be sowe,
And thyn howses reysed up, that ben leyd so low.'
Thus seyde the knight to Gamelyn with mowthe,
And thought eek of falsnes, as he wel couthe.
The knight thought on tresoun, and Gamelyn on noon,
And went and kist his brother, and than they were at oon.
Allas! yonge Gamelyn, nothing he ne wiste
With which a false tresoun his brother him kiste.
Litheth, and lestneth, and holdeth your tonge,
And ye schul heere talkyng of Gamelyn the yonge.
Ther was ther bysiden cryed a wrastlyng,[1]
And therfor ther was sette up a ram and a ryng;[2]
And Gamelyn was in good wil to wende therto,
For to preven his might what he cowthe do.
'Brother,' seyde Gamelyn, 'by seynt Richer,
Thou most lene me to nyght a litel-courser
That is freisch to the spore, on for to ryde;
I most on an erande, a litel her byside.'
'By God!' seyd his brother, 'of steedes in my stalle
Go and chese the the best, and spare non of alle.
Of steedes or of coursers that stonden hem bisyde;
And tel me, goode brother, whider thou wolt ryde.'
'Her byside, brother, is cryed a wrastlyng,
And therfor schal be set up a ram and a ryng;
Moche worschip it were, brother, to us alle,
Might I the ram and the ryng bryng home to this halle.'

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[1] A wrestling match was cried or proclaimed beside that place.
[2] See *ante*, p. 100, note 2.

A steede ther was sadeled smertely and skeet;
Gamelyn did a paire spores fast on his feet,
He set his foot in the styrop, the steede he bystrood,
And toward the wrastelyng the yonge child rood.
Tho Gamelyn the yonge was ride out at the gate,
The fals knight his brother lokked it after thate,
And bysoughte Jhesu Crist that is heven kyng
He mighte breke his nekke in that wrastlyng.
As sone as Gamelyn com ther the place was,
He lighte doun of his steede, and stood on the gras,
And ther he herd a frankeleyn wayloway syng,
And bigan bitterly his hondes for to wryng.
'Goode man,' seyde Gamelyn, 'why makestow this fare?
Is ther no man that may you helpe out of this care?'
'Allas!' seyde this frankleyn, 'that ever was I bore!
For tweye stalworthe sones I wene that I have lore;
A champioun is in the place, that hath i-wrought me sorwe,
For he hath slayn my two sones, but if God hem borwe.
I wold geve ten pound, by Jhesu Crist! and more,
With the nones I fand a man to handil him sore.'
'Goode man,' sayde Gamelyn, 'wilt thou wel doon,
Hold myn hors, whil my man draweth of my schoon,
And help my man to kepe my clothes and my steede,
And I wil into place go, to loke if I may speede.'
'By God!' sayde the frankeleyn, 'anon it schal be doon;
I wil myself be thy man, to drawen of thy schoon,
And wende thou into the place, Jhesu Crist the speede!
And drede not of thy clothes, nor of thy goode steede.'
Barfoot and ungert Gamelyn in cam,
Alle that weren in the place heede of him they nam,
How he durst auntre him of him to doon his might
That was so doughty champioun in wrastlyng and in fight.
Up sterte the champioun raply and anoon,
Toward yonge Gamelyn he bigan to goon,
And sayde, 'Who is thy fader and who is thy sire?
For sothe thou art a gret fool, that thou come hire.'

Gamelyn answerde the champioun tho,
'Thou knewe wel my fader whil he couthe go,
Whiles he was on lyve, by seint Martyn!
Sir Johan of Boundys was his name, and I Gamelyn.'
'Felaw,' seyde the champioun, 'al so mot I thryve,
I knew wel thy fader, whil he was on lyve;
And thiself, Gamelyn, I wil that thou it heere,
Whil thou were a yong boy a moche schrewe thou were.'
Than seyde Gamelyn, and swor by Cristes ore,
'Now I am older woxe, thou schalt me fynd a more.'
'Be God!' sayde the champioun, 'welcome mote thou be!
Come thou ones in myn hond, schalt thou never the.'
It was wel withinne the night, and the moone schon,
Whan Gamelyn and the champioun togider gon to goon.[1]
The champioun caste tornes[2] to Gamelyn that was prest,
And Gamelyn stood stille, and bad him doon his best.
Thanne seyde Gamelyn to the champioun,
'Thou art fast aboute to brynge me adoun;
Now I have i-proved many tornes of thyne,
Thow most,' he seyde, 'proven on or tuo of myne.'
Gamelyn to the champioun yede smartly anon,
Of alle the tornes that he cowthe he schewed him but oon,
And kast him on the left syde, that thre ribbes to-brak,
And therto his oon arm, that gaf a gret crak.
Thanne seyde Gamelyn smertly anoon,
'Schal it be holde for a cast,[3] or elles for noon?'
'By God,' seyd the champioun, 'whether that it bee,
He that comes ones in thin hand schal he never thee!'

---

[1] Began to go.

[2] That is, made many attempts to trip him up and throw him, which Gamelyn was, however, prepared for, (prest) and evaded.

[3] Spoken ironically, 'Shall it be counted for a fall?'

Than seyde the frankeleyn, that had his sones there,
'Blessed be thou, Gamelyn, that ever thou bore were!'
The frankleyn seyd to the champioun, of him stood him noon eye,[1]
'This is yonge Gamelyn that taughte the this pleye,'
Agein answerd the champioun, that liked nothing welle,
'He is a lither mayster, and his pley is right felle;
Sith I wrastled first, it is i-go ful yore,
But I was nevere my lyf handled so sore.'
Gamelyn stood in the place allone withoute serk,
And seyd, 'If there be eny mo, lat hem come to werk;
The champioun that peyned him to werke so sore,
It seemeth by his continuance that he wil nomore.'
Gamelyn in the place stood as stille as stoon,
For to abyde wrastelyng, but there com noon;
Ther was noon with Gamelyn wolde wrastle more,
For he handled the champioun so wonderly sore.
Two gentilmen ther were yemede the place,
Comen to Gamelyn, God give him goode grace!
And sayde to hem, 'Do on thyn hosen and thy schoon,
For sothe at this tyme this feire is i-doon.'
And than seyde Gamelyn, 'So mot I wel fare,
I have nought yet halvendel sold up my ware.'
Tho seyde the champioun, 'So brouk I my sweere,
He is a fool that thereof buyeth, thou selleth it so deere.'
Tho sayde the frankeleyn that was in moche care,
'Felaw,' he seyde, 'why lakkest thou his ware?
By seynt Jame in Galys,[2] that many man hath sought,
Yet it is to good cheep that thou hast i-bought.'
Tho that wardeynes were of that wrastlyng,
Come and broughte Gamelyn the ram and the ryng,
And seyden, 'Have, Gamelyn, the ryng and the ram,
For the best wrasteler that ever here cam.'

[1] Means, apparently, 'Of him he stood in no *awe*.'

[2] See *ante*, p. 97, note 2.

Thus wan Gamelyn the ram and the ryng,
And went with moche joye home in the mornyng.
His brother seih wher he cam with the grete rowte,
And bad schitte the gate, and holde him withoute,
The porter of his lord was ful sore agast,
And stert anon to the gate, and lokked it fast.
Now litheth, and lestneth, bothe yong and olde,
And ye schul heere gamen of Gamelyn the bolde.
Gamelyn come therto for to have comen in,
And thanne was it i-schet faste with a pyn;
Than seyde Gamelyn, 'Porter, undo the yate,
For many good mannes sone stondeth therate.'
Than answerd the porter, and swor by Goddes berde,
'Thow ne schalt, Gamelyn come into this yerde.'
'Thow lixt,' sayde Gamelyn, 'so browke I my chyn!'
He smot the wyket with his foot, and brak awey the pyn.
The porter seyh tho it might no better be,
He sette foot on erthe, and fast bigan to flee.
'By my faith,' seyde Gamelyn, 'that travail is i-lore,
For I am of foot as lighte as thou, though thow haddest swore.'
Gamelyn overtook the porter, and his teene wrak,
And gert him in the neckke, that the bon to-brak,
And took him by that oon arm, and threw him in a welle,
Seven fadmen it was deep, as I have herd telle.
Whan Gamelyn the yonge thus hadde pleyed his play,
Alle that in the yerde were drewen hem away;
They dredden him ful sore, for werkes that he wroughte,
And for the faire company that he thider broughte.
Gamelyn yede to the gate, and leet it up wyde;
He leet in alle maner men that gon in wold or ryde,
And seyde, 'Ye be welcome withouten eny greeve,
For we wiln be maistres heer, and aske no man leve.
Yestirday I lefte,' seyde yonge Gamelyn,
'In my brother seller fyve tonne of wyn;
I wil not that this compaignye parten a-twynne,
And ye wil doon after me, while eny sope is thrynne;

And if my brother grucche, or make foul cheere,
Other for spense of mete or drynk that we spenden heere,
I am oure catour, and bere oure aller purs,
He schal have for his grucchyng seint Maries curs.
My brother is a nyggoun, I swer by Cristes ore,
And we wil spende largely that he hath spared yore;
And who that maketh grucchyng that we here dwelle,
He schal to the porter into the draw-welle.'
Seven dayes and seven nyght Gamelyn held his feste,
With moche myrth and solas that was ther and no cheste;
In a litel toret his brother lay i-steke,
And sey him wasten his good, but durst he not speke.
Erly on a mornyng on the eighte day
The gestes come to Gamelyn and wolde gon here way.
'Lordes,' seyde Gamelyn, 'wil ye so hye?
Al the wyn is not yet y-dronke, so brouk I myn ye.'
Gamelyn in his herte was he ful wo,
Whan his gestes took her leve from him for to go;
He wold they had lenger abide, and they seyde nay,
But bitaughte Gamelyn God, and good day.
Thus made Gamelyn his fest, and brought it wel to ende,
And after his gestys took leve to wende.
Litheth, and lestneth, and holdeth youre tonge,
And ye schul heere gamen of Gamelyn the yonge;
Herkneth, lordynges, and lesteneth aright, dight,
Whan alle the gestes were goon how Gamelyn was
Al the whil that Gamelyn heeld his mangerye,
His brother thought on him be wreke with his treccherie.
Tho Gamelyns gestes were riden and i-goon,
Gamelyn stood allone, frendes had he noon;
Tho after full soone withinne a litel stounde,
Gamelyn was i-take and ful hard ibounde.
Forth com the fals knight out of the selleer,
To Gamelyn his brother he yede ful neer,
And sayde to Gamelyn, 'Who made the so bold
For to stroye my stoor of myn houshold?'

'Brother,' seyde Gamelyn, 'wraththe the right nought,
For it is many day i-gon siththen it was bought;
For, brother, thou hast i-had, by seynt Richer,
Of fiftene plowes of lond this sixtene yer,
And of alle the beestes thou hast forth bred,
That my fader me biquath on his deth bed;
Of al this sixtene yeer I geve the the prow
For the mete and the drynk that we have spended now.'
Thanne seyde the fals knyght, evel mot he the,
'Herkne, brother Gamelyn, what I wol geve the;
For of my body, brother, geten heir have I noon,
I wil make the myn heir, I swere by seint Johan.'
'*Par ma foy!*' sayde Gamelyn, 'and if it so be,
And thou thenke as thou seyst, God yelde it the!'
Nothing wiste Gamelyn of his brotheres gyle;
Therfore he him bigyled in a litel while.
'Gamelyn,' seyde he, 'o thing I the telle;
Tho thou threwe my porter in the draw-welle,
I swor in that wraththe, and in that grete moot,
That thou schuldest be bounde bothe hand and foot;
Therfore I the biseche, brother Gamelyn,
Lat me nought be forsworn, as brother art thou myn;
Lat me bynde the now bothe hand and feet,
For to holde myn avow, as I the biheet.'
'Brother,' sayde Gamelyn, 'al so mot I the!
Thou schalt not be forsworen for the love of me.'
Tho made they Gamelyn to sitte, might he nat stonde,
Tyl they had him bounde bothe foot and honde.
The fals knight his brother of Gamelyn was agast,
And sent aftir feteres to feteren him fast.
His brother made lesynges on him ther he stood,
And told hem that comen in that Gamelyn was wood.
Gamelyn stood to a post bounden in the halle,
Tho that comen in ther loked on him alle.
Ever stood Gamelyn even upright;
But mete ne drynk had ne non neither day ne night.
Than seyde Gamelyn, 'Brother, by myn hals,
Now I have aspied thou art a party fals;

Had I wist that tresoun that thou haddest y-founde,
I wolde have geve the strokes or I had be bounde!'
Gamelyn stood bounden stille as eny stoon;
Two dayes and two nightes mete had he noon.
Thanne seyde Gamelyn, that stood y-bounde stronge,
'Adam spenser, me thinkth I faste to longe;
Adam spenser, now I bysech the,
For the mochel love my fader loved the,
Yf thou may come to the keyes, lese me out of bond,
And I wil parte with the of my free lond.'
Thanne seyde Adam, that was the spencer,
'I have served thy brother this sixtene yeer,
If I leete the goon out of this bour,
He wolde say afterward I were a traytour.'
'Adam,' sayde Gamelyn, 'so brouk I myn hals!
Thou schalt fynde my brother atte laste fals;
Therfor, brother Adam, louse me out of bond,
And I wil parte with the of my free lond.'
'Up swich a forward,' seyde Adam, 'i-wys,
I wil do therto al that in me is.'
'Adam,' seyde Gamelyn, 'al so mot I the,
I wol hold the covenant, and thou wil me.'
Anon as Adames lord to bedde was i-goon,
Adam took the keyes, and leet Gamelyn out anoon;
He unlokked Gamelyn bothe hand and feet,
In hope of avauncement that he him byheet.
Than seyde Gamelyn, 'Thanked be Goddes sonde!
Now I am loosed bothe foot and honde;
Had I now eten and dronken aright,
Ther is noon in this hous schuld bynde me this night.'
Adam took Gamelyn, as stille as eny stoon,
And ladde him into spence rapely and anon,
And sette him to soper right in a prive stede,
And bad him do gladly, and Gamelyn so dede.
Anon as Gamelyn hadde eten wel and fyn,
And therto y-dronke wel of the rede wyn,
'Adam,' seyde Gamelyn, 'what is now thy reed?
Wher I go to my brother and girde of his heed?'

'Gamelyn,' seyde Adam, 'it schal not be so,
I can teche the a reed that is worth the two.
I wot wel for sothe that this is no nay,
We schul have a mangery right on Sonday;
Abbotes and priours many heer schal be,
And other men of holy chirche, as I telle the; [fast,
Thow schalt stonde up by the post as thou were hond-
And I schal leve hem unloke, awey thou may hem cast,
Whan that they have eten and waisschen here hondes,
Thou schalt biseke hem alle to bryng the out of bondes;
And if they wille borwe the, that were good game,
Then were thou out of prisoun, and I out of blame;
And if everich of hem say unto us nay,
I schal do another thing, I swere by this day!
Thou schalt have a good staf and I wil have another,
And Cristes curs have that oon that faileth that other!'
'Ye, for Gode!' sayde Gamelyn, 'I say it for me,
If I fayle on my syde, yvel mot I the!
If we schul algate assoile hem of here synne,
Warne me, brother Adam, whan I schal bygynne.'
'Gamelyn,' seyde Adam, 'by seynte Charité,
I wil warne the byforn whan that it schal be;
Whan I twynk on the, loke for to goon,
And cast awey the feteres, and com to me anoon.'
'Adam,' seide Gamelyn, 'blessed be thy bones!
That is a good counseil gevyng for the nones;
If they werne me thanne to brynge me out of bendes,
I wol sette goode strokes right on here lendes.'
Tho the Sonday was i-come, and folk to the feste,
Faire they were welcomed bothe lest and meste;
And ever as they atte halle dore comen in,
They caste their eye on yonge Gamelyn.
The fals knight his brother, ful of trechery,
Alle the gestes that ther wer atte mangery,
Of Gamelyn his brother he tolde hem with mouthe
Al the harm and the schame that he telle couthe.
Tho they were served of messes tuo or thre,
Than seyde Gamelyn, 'How serve ye me?

It is nought wel served, by God that al made!
That I sytte fastyng, and other men make glade.'
The fals knight his brother, ther that he stood,
Tolde alle his gestes that Gamelyn was wood;
And Gamelyn stood stille, and answerde nought,
But Adames wordes he held in his thought.
Tho Gamelyn gan speke dolfully withalle
To the gret lordes that saten in the halle:
'Lordes,' he seyde, 'for Cristes passioun,
Helpeth brynge Gamelyn out of prisoun.'
Than seyde an abbot, sorwe on his cheeke!
'He schal have Cristes curs and seynte Maries eeke,
That the out of prisoun beggeth other borwe,
But ever worthe hem wel that doth the moche sorwe.'
After that abbot than spak another,
'I wold thin heed were of, though thou were my bro-
Alle that the borwe, foule mot hem falle!' [ther!
Thus they seyde alle that were in the halle.
Than seyde a priour, yvel mot he thryve!
'It is moche skathe; boy, that thou art on lyve.'
'Ow,' seyde Gamelyn, 'so brouk I my bon?
Now I have aspyed that freendes have I non.
Cursed mot he worthe bothe fleisch and blood,
That ever do priour or abbot ony good!'
Adam the spencer took up the cloth,
And loked on Gamelyn, and say that he was wroth;
Adam on the pantrye litel he thought,
But tuo goode staves to halle dore he brought.
Adam loked on Gamelyn, and he was war anoon,
And caste awey the feteres, and he bigan to goon:
Tho he com to Adam, he took that oo staf,
And bygan to worche, and goode strokes gaf.
Gamelyn cam into the halle, and the spencer bothe,
And loked hem aboute, as they had be wrothe;
Gamelyn sprengeth holy-water with an oken spire,
That some that stoode upright fel in the fire.
Ther was no lewede man that in the halle stood,
That wolde do Gamelyn eny thing but good,

But stood besyde, and leet hem bothe werche,
For they hadde no rewthe of men of holy cherche;[1]
Abbot or priour, monk or chanoun,
That Gamelyn overtok, anon they yeeden doun.
Ther was non of hem alle that with his staf mette,
That he made him overthrowe and quyt him his dette.
'Gamelyn,' seyde Adam, 'for seynte Charité,
Pay large lyverey, for the love of me,
And I wil kepe the dore, so ever here I masse!
Er they ben assoyled ther shan noon passe.'
'Dowt the nought,' seyde Gamelyn, 'whil we ben in feere,
Kep thou wel the dore, and I wol werche heere;
Stere the, good Adam, and lat ther noon flee,
And we schul telle largely how many ther be.'
'Gamelyn,' seyde Adam, 'do hem but good;
They ben men of holy chirche, draw of hem no blood,
Save wel the croune,[2] and do hem non harmes,
But brek bothe her legges and siththen here armes.'
Thus Gamelyn and Adam wroughte right fast,
And pleyden with the monkes, and made hem agast.

[1] The hatred of churchmen, of holy water, and of everything connected with the church, observable in all the ballads of this class, is probably in part owing to the fact alluded to in the introduction to this tale, viz., that William the Conqueror and his immediate successors systematically removed the Saxon bishops and abbots, and intruded Normans in their stead into all the valuable preferments in England. But there were also other grounds for the odium in which these foreign prelates were held. Sharing in the duties of the common law judges, they participated in the aversion with which the functionaries of the law were naturally regarded by outlaws and robbers; just as the parson who, at the present day, combines the magisterial with the sacerdotal office, is generally an object of special dislike to thieves and poachers. Numerous examples of the hostility of the outlaws to the higher clergy and officers of the law will occur to every reader of the ballads of Robin Hood. For instance, in the *Lytel Geste*, already quoted, Robin thus directs Little John:—

'These bysshopes and these archebysshoppes,
Ye shall them beete and bynde;
The high sheryfe of Notynghame,
Hym holde ye in your mynde.'

[2] He says, ironically, 'Do not break their heads,' because of the tonsure, the peculiar mark of the clerical profession.

Thider they come rydyng jolily with swaynes,
But hom agen they were i-lad in cartes and in waynes,
Tho they hadden al y-don, than seyde a gray frere,[1]
'Allas! sire abbot, what did we now heere?
Tho that comen hider, it was a colde reed,
Us hadde ben better at home with water and breed.'
Whil Gamelyn made ordres[2] of monkes and frere,
Ever stood his brother, and made foul chere;
Gamelyn up with his staff, that he wel knew,
And gert him in the nekke, that he overthrew;
A litel above the girdel the rigge-bon to-barst;
And sette him in the feteres ther he sat arst.
'Sitte ther, brother,' sayde Gamelyn,
'For to colyn thy blood, as I dide myn.'
As swithe as they hadde i-wroken hem on here foon,
They askeden watir and wisschen anoon,
What some for here love and some for awe,
Alle the servantz served hem of the beste lawe.
The scherreve was thennes but a fyve myle,
And al was y-told him in a litel while,
How Gamelyn and Adam had doon a sory rees,
Bounden and i-wounded men agein the kinges pees;
Tho bigan sone strif for to wake,
And the scherref aboute cast Gamelyn for to take.
Now lytheth and lestneth, so God gif you goode fyn!
And ye schul heere good game of yonge Gamelyn.
Four and twenty yonge men, that heelden hem ful bolde,
Come to the schirref and seyde that they wolde
Gamelyn and Adam fetten away.
The scherref gaf hem leve, soth as I you say;
They hyeden faste, wold they nought bylynne,
Til they come to the gate, ther Gamelyn was inne.

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[1] A Franciscan, or friar minor, the habit of this order being grey.

[2] This expression seems to mean primarily, took order for the monks and friars, or disposed of them; but it appears to have a secondary ironical allusion to the ceremony of ordination, which consists in *the laying on of hands*, and is as much as to say, 'While Gamelyn gave these monks and friars a new kind of orders.'

They knokked on the gate, the porter was ny,
And loked out at an hol, as man that was sly.
The porter hadde byholde hem a litel while,
He loved wel Gamelyn, and was adrad of gyle,
And asked hem withoute what was here wille.
For al the grete company thanne spak but oon,
'Undo the gate, porter, and lat us in goon.'
Than seyde the porter, 'So brouke I my chyn,
Ye schul sey your erand er ye comen in.'
'Sey to Gamelyn and Adam, if here wille be,
We wil speke with hem wordes two or thre.'
'Felawe,' seyde the porter, 'stond there stille,
And I wil wende to Gamelyn to witen his wille.'
In went the porter to Gamelyn anoon,
And seyde, 'Sir, I warne you her ben come your foon,
The scherreves meyne ben atte gate,
For to take you bothe, schul ye nat skape.'
'Porter,' seyde Gamelyn, 'so moot I wel the!
I wil allowe the thy wordes[1] whan I my tyme se;
Go agayn to the gate, and dwel with hem a while,
And thou schalt se right sone, porter, a gyle.
Adam,' sayde Gamelyn, 'looke the to goon;
We have foomen atte gate, and frendes never oon;
It ben the schirrefes men, that hider ben i-come,
They ben swore to-gidere that we schul be nome.'
'Gamelyn,' seyde Adam, 'hye the right blyve,
And if I faile the this day, evel mot I thryve!
And we schul so welcome the scherreves men,
That some of hem schul make here beddes in the den.'
Atte posterne gate Gamelyn out went,
And a good cart staf in his hand he hente;
Adam hente sone another gret staf,
For to helpe Gamelyn, and goode strokes gaf.
Adam felde tweyne, and Gamelyn felde thre,
The other setten feet on erthe, and bygonne fle.
'What?' seyde Adam, 'so ever here I masse!
I have a draught of good wyn, drynk er ye passe.'

[1] I will give you the benefit of, or repay you for, your words, when I see an opportunity.

'Nay, by God!' sayde they, 'thy drynk is not good,
It wolde make mannes brayne to lien in his hood.'
Gamelyn stood stille, and loked him aboute,
And seih the scherreve come with a gret route.
'Adam,' sayde Gamelyn, 'my reed is now this,
Abide we no lenger, lest we fare amys:
I rede that we to wode goon ar that we be founde,
Better is us ther loose than in town y-bounde.'
Adam took by the hond yonge Gamelyn;
And everich of hem tuo drank a draught of wyn,
And after took her coursers and wenten her way.
Tho fond the scherreve nest, but non ay.
The scherreve lighte adoun, and went into the halle,
And fond the lord y-fetered faste withalle.
The scherreve unfetered him sone, and that anoon,
And sent after a leche to hele his rigge-boon.
Lete we now this fals knight lyen in his care,
And talke we of Gamelyn, and loke how he fare.
Gamelyn into the woode stalkede stille,
And Adam the spenser liked ful ylle;
Adam swor to Gamelyn, by seynt Richer,
'Now I see it is mery to be a spencer,
That lever me were keyes for to bere,
Than walken in this wilde woode my clothes to tere.'
'Adam,' seyde Gamelyn, 'dismaye the right nought;
Many good mannes child in care is i-brought.'
And as they stoode talkyng bothen in feere,
Adam herd talkyng of men, and ney him thought thei were.
Tho Gamelyn under the woode loked aright,
Sevene score of yonge men he saugh wel adight;
Alle satte atte mete in compas aboute.
'Adam,' seyde Gamelyn, 'now have we no doute,
After bale cometh boote, thurgh grace of God almight;
Me thynketh of mete and of drynk that I have a sight.'
Adam lokede tho under woode bowgh,
And whan he seyh mete he was glad ynough;
For he hopede to God for to have his deel,
And he was sore alonged after a good meel.

As he seyde that worde, the mayster outlawe
Saugh Gamelyn and Adam under woode schawe.
'Yonge men,' seyde the maister, 'by the goode roode,
I am war of gestes, God send us non but goode;
Yonder ben tuo yonge men, wonder wel adight,
And paraventure ther ben mo, who so loked aright.
Ariseth up, ye yonge men, and fetteth hem to me;
It is good that we witen what men they bee.'
Up ther sterten sevene fro the dyner,
And metten with Gamelyn and Adam spenser.
Whan they were neyh hem, than seyde that oon,
'Yeldeth up, yonge men, your bowes and your floon.'
Thanne seyde Gamelyn, that yong was of elde,
'Moche sorwe mot he have that to you hem yelde!
I curse non other, but right myselve,
They ye fette to yow fyve, thanne ye be twelve.'
Tho they herde by his word that might was in his arm,
Ther was none of hem alle that wolde do him harm,
But sayd unto Gamelyn, myldely and stille,
'Com afore our maister, and sey to him thy wille.'
'Yonge men,' sayde Gamelyn, 'by your lewte,
What man is your maister that ye with be!'
Alle they answerde withoute lesyng,
'Oure maister is i-crouned of outlawes kyng.'
'Adam,' seyde Gamelyn, 'go we in Cristes name;
He may neyther mete nor drynk werne us for schame.
If that he be heende, and come of gentil blood,
He wol geve us mete and drynk, and doon us som good.'
'By seynt Jame!' seyd Adam, 'what harm that I gete,
I wil auntre to the dore that I hadde mete.'
Gamelyn and Adam wente forth in feere,
And they grette the maister that they founde there.
Than seide the maister, kyng of outlawes,
'What seeke ye, yonge men, under woode schawes?'
Gamelyn answerde the kyng with his croune,
'He moste needes walke in woode, that may not
walke in towne.
Sire, we walk not heer noon harm for to do,
But if we meete with a deer, to scheete therto,

As men that ben hungry, and mow no mete fynde,
And ben harde bystad under woode lynde.'
Of Gamelynes wordes the maister hadde routhe,
And seyde, 'Ye schal have ynough, have God my trouthe,'
He bad hem sitte ther adoun, for to take reste;
And bad hem ete and drynke, and that of the beste.
As they sete and eeten and dronke wel and fyn,
Than seyd that oon to that other, 'This is Gamelyn.'
Tho was the maister outlawe into counseil nome,
And told how it was Gamelyn that thider was i-come.
Anon as he herde how it was bifalle,
He made him maister under him over hem alle.
Within the thridde wyke him com tydyng,
To the maister outlawe that tho was her kyng,
That he schulde come hom, his pees was i-made;
And of that goode tydyng he was tho ful glad.
Tho seyde he to his yonge men, soth for to telle,
'Me ben comen tydynges I may no lenger dwelle.'
Tho was Gamelyn anon, withoute taryyng,
Made maister outlawe, and crouned her kyng.
Tho was Gamelyn crouned kyng of outlawes,
And walked a while under woode schawes.
The fals knight his brother was scherreve and sire,
And leet his brother endite for hate and for ire.
Tho were his bonde-men sory and nothing glade,
Whan Gamelyn her lord wolves heed[1] was cryed and made;
And sente out of his men wher they might him fynde,
For to seke Gamelyn under woode lynde,
To telle him tydynges how the wynd was went,
And al his good reved, and his men schent.[2]

[1] This was the ancient Saxon formula of outlawry, and seems to have been literally equivalent to setting the man's head at the same estimate as a wolf's head. In the laws of Edward the Confessor, it is said of a person who has fled justice, 'Si vero postea repertus fuerit, et retineri possit, vivus regi reddatur, vel caput ejus, si se defenderit. Lupinum enim gerit caput, quod anglice *wulfes-heofod* dicitur. Et hæc est lex communis et generalis de omnibus utlagatis.'—W.

[2] On change of possession by the death or outlawry of the Lord of

Whan they had him founde, on knees they hem sette,
And adoun with here hood, and here lord grette:
'Sire, wraththe[1] you nought, for the goode roode,
For we have brought you tydynges, but they be nat goode.
Now is thy brother scherreve, and hath the baillye,[2]
And he hath endited the, and wolves-heed doth the crie.'
'Allas!' seyde Gamelyn, 'that ever I was so slak
That I ne hadde broke his nekke, tho his rigge brak!
Goth, greteth hem wel, myn housbondes and wyf,[3]
I wol ben atte nexte schire, have God my lyf.'
Gamelyn came wel redy to the nexte schire,
And ther was his brother bothe lord and sire.
Gamelyn com boldelych into the moot halle,
And put adoun his hood among the lordes alle:
'God save you alle, lordynges, that now here be!
But broke-bak scherreve, evel mot thou the!
Why hast thou do me that schame and vilonye,
For to late endite me, and wolves-heed me crye?'
Tho thought the fals knight for to ben awreke,
And leet take Gamelyn, most he nomore speke;
Might ther be nomore grace, but Gamelyn atte last
Was cast into prisoun and fetered ful fast.
Gamelyn hath a brother that highte sir Ote,
As good a knight and heende as mighte gon on foote.
Anon ther yede a messager to that goode knight,
And tolde him altogidere how Gamelyn was dight.

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the Manor, the serfs, or vilains regardant, who went with the property of the soil, were liable to pay fines to his successor; and, in a case like the present, these fines would probably be oppressively exacted.

[1] A man of Gamelyn's violent temper might be expected to wreak his vengeance on the slave who brought him evil tidings. This is a feeling by no means peculiar to the middle ages.

[2] That is, 'has obtained the government of the bailiwick.' In former times, before the modern system of standing armies and municipal police was introduced, the high sheriff was the officer personally responsible for the peace of his bailiwick, which he maintained by calling out the *posse comitatus* to assist him.

[3] This means, apparently, 'My husbandmen and their wives.'

Anon as sire Ote herde how Gamelyn was adight,
He was wonder sory, was he nothing light,
And leet sadle a steede, and the way he nam,
And to his tweyne bretheren anon right he cam.
'Sire,' seyde sire Ote to the scherreve tho,
'We ben but thre bretheren, schul we never be mo,
And thou hast y-prisoned the best of us alle;
Swich another brother yvel mot him bifalle!'
'Sire Ote,' seide the fals knight, 'lat be thi curs;
By God, for thy wordes he schal fare the wurs;
To the kynges prisoun anon he is y-nome,
And ther he schal abyde til the justice come.'
'Parde!' seyde sir Ote, 'better it schal be,
I bidde him to maympris, that thou graunt him me,
Til the nexte sittyng of delyveraunce,[1]
And thanne lat Gamelyn stande to his chaunce.'
'Brother, in swich a forthward take him to the;
And by thi fader soule, that the bygat and me,
But if he be redy whan the justice sitte,
Thou schalt bere the juggerment for al thi grete witte.'
'I graunte wel,' seide sir Ote, 'that it so be.
Let delyver him anon, and tak him to me.'
Tho was Gamelyn delyvered to sire Ote his brother;
And that night dwelleden that on with that other.
On the morn seyde Gamelyn to sire Ote the heende,
'Brother,' he seide, 'I moot for sothe from the wende,
To loke how my yonge men leden here lyf,
Whether they lyven in joie or elles in stryf.'
'Be God!' seyde sire Ote, 'that is a cold reed,
Now I see that al the cark schall fallen on myn heed;
For whan the justice sitte, and thou be nought y-founde,
I schal anon be take, and in thy stede i-bounde.'
'Brother,' sayde Gamelyn, 'dismaye the nought,
For by seint Jame in Gales, that many man hath sought,
If that God almighty hold my lyf and witt,
I wil be ther redy whan the justice sitt.'

[1] I demand that he granted to me on mainprize, or bail, till the assize for general gaol delivery.

Than seide sir Ote to Gamelyn, 'God schielde the fro schame;
Com whan thou seest tyme, and bring us out of blame.'
Litheth, and lestneth, and holdeth you stille,
And ye schul here how Gamelyn had al his wille.
Gamelyn wente agein under woode rys,
And fond there pleying yonge men of prys.
Tho was yonge Gamelyn glad and blithe ynough,
Whan he fond his mery men under woode bough.
Gamelyn and his men talked in feere,
And they hadde good game here maister to heere;
They tolden him of aventures that they hadde founde,
And Gamelyn hem tolde agein how he was fast i-bounde.
Whil Gamelyn was outlawed, had he no cors;
There was no man that for him ferde the wors,
But abbotes and priours, monk and chanoun;[1]
On hem left he nothing whan he might hem nom,
Whil Gamelyn and his men made merthes ryve,
The fals knight his brother, yvel mot he thryve!
For he was fast about bothe day and other,
For to hyre the quest,[2] to hangen his brother.
Gamelyn stood on a day, and as he biheeld
The woodes and the schawes in the wilde feeld,
He thought on his brother how he him beheet
That he wolde be redy whan the justice seet;
He thoughte wel that he wolde, withoute delay,
Come afore the justice to kepen his day,
And seide to his yonge men, 'Dighteth you yare,
For whan the justice sit, we moote be thare,
For I am under borwe til that I come,
And my brother for me to prisoun schal be nome.'
'By seint Jame!' seyde his yonge men, 'and thou rede therto,
Ordeyne how it schal be, and it schal be do.'

[1] See *ante*, p. 255, note 1. [2] To suborn the jury.

Whil Gamelyn was comyng ther the justice sat,
The fals knight his brother, forgat he nat that,
To huyre the men on his quest to hangen his brother;
Though he hadde nought that oon he wolde have
Tho cam Gamelyn fro under woode rys, [that other
And broughte with him his yonge men of prys.
'I se wel,' seyde Gamelyn, 'the justice is sette;
Go aforn, Adam, and loke how it spette.'
Adam went into the halle, and loked al aboute,
He seyh there stonde lordes gret and stoute,
And sir Ote his brother fetered wel fast:
Tho went Adam out of halle, as he were aghast.
Adam said to Gamelyn and to his felaws alle,
'Sir Ote stant i-fetered in the moot halle.'
'Yonge men,' seide Gamelyn, 'this ye heeren alle;
Sire Ote stant i-fetered in the moot halle.
If God gif us grace wel for to doo,
He schal it abegge that broughte him thertoo.'
Thanne sayde Adam, that lokkes hadde hore,
'Cristes curs most he have that him bond so sore!
And thou wilt, Gamelyn, do after my red,
Ther is noon in the halle schal bere awey his heed.'
'Adam,' seyde Gamelyn, 'we wiln nought don so,
We wil slee the giltyf, and lat the other go.
I wil into the halle, and with the justice speke;
On hem that ben gultyf I wil ben awreke.
Lat non skape at the dore; take, yonge men, yeme;
For I wil be justice this day domes to deme.
God spede me this day at my newe werk!
Adam, com on with me, for thou schalt be my clerk.'
His men answereden him and bade him doon his best,
'And if thou to us have neede, thou schalt fynde us prest;
We wiln stande with the, wil that we may dure,
And but we werke manly, pay us non hure.'
'Yonge men,' seyde Gamelyn, 'so mot I wel the!
As trusty a maister ye schal fynde of me.'

Right there the justice sat in the halle,
In wente Gamelyn amonges hem alle.
Gamelyn leet unfetere his brother out of beende.
Thanne seyde sir Ote, his brother that was heende,
'Thou haddest almost, Gamelyn, dwelled to longe,
For the quest is oute[1] on me, that I schulde honge.'
'Brother,' seyde Gamelyn, 'so God gif me good rest!
This day they schuln ben hanged that ben on thy quest;
And the justice bothe that is jugges man,
And the scherreve bothe, thurgh him it bigan.'
Than seyde Gamelyn to the justise,
'Now is thy power y-don, thou most nedes arise;
Thow hast geven domes that ben yvel dight,
I wil sitten in thy sete, and dressen hem aright.'
The justice sat stille, and roos nought anoon;
And Gamelyn clevede his cheeke boon;
Gamelyn took him in his arm, and no more spak,
But threw him over the barre, and his arm to-brak.
Durste non to Gamelyn seye but good,
For-fered of the company that withoute stood.
Gamelyn sette him doun in the justices sete,
And sire Ote his brother by him, and Adam at his feet.
Whan Gamelyn was i-set in the justices stede,
Herkneth of a bourde that Gamelyn dede.
He leet fetre the justice and his fals brother,
And dede hem come to the barre, that oon with that other.
Tho Gamelyn hadde thus y-doon, had he no rest,
Til he had enquered who was on the quest
For to deme his brother, sir Ote, for to honge;
Er he wiste which they were it thoughte ful longe.

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[1] The verdict is delivered.

But as sone as Gamelyn wiste wher they were,
He dede hem everichone fetere in feere,
And bringen hem to the barre, and sette hem in rewe; [schrewe.'
'By my faith!' seyde the justice, 'the scherreve is a
Than seyde Gamelyn to the justise,
'Thou hast y-geve domes of the wors assise,
And the twelve sisours that weren of the queste,
'They schul ben hanged this day, so have I reste.'
Thanne seide the scherreve to yonge Gamelyn,
'Lord I cry the mercy, brother art thou myn.'
'Therfore,' seyde Gamelyn, 'have thou Cristes curs,
For and thou were maister, yit I schulde have wors.'
But for to make short tale, and nought to tarie longe,
He ordeyned him a queste[1] of his men so stronge;
The justice and the scherreve bothe honged hye,
To weyven with ropes and with the wynd drye;
And the twelve sisours, sorwe have that rekke!
Alle they were hanged faste by the nekke.
Thus ended the fals knight with his treccherie,
That ever had i-lad his lyf in falsnes and folye;
He was hanged by the nek, and nought by the purs,
That was the meede that he had for his fadres curs.
Sir Ote was eldest, and Gamelyn was ying,
They wenten with here freendes even to the kyng;
They made pees with the kyng of the best assise.
The kyng loved wel sir Ote, and made him a justise.
And after the kyng made Gamelyn, both in est and
Chef justice of al his fre forest;[2] [west,
Alle his wighte yonge men the kyng forgaf here gilt,
And sitthen in good office the kyng hem hath i-pilt.

[1] He chose a jury.

[2] This is the usual *dénouement* of all the tales of this class, and it may possibly be founded upon fact. For it might be sound policy on the king's part to enlist the services of a bold and popular outlaw, like Gamelyn, in the cause of order, at a time when personal valour and daring were often able to set the law at defiance. An honest but inexperienced and unwarlike magistrate would have been of very little use in a forest in Nottinghamshire in the thirteenth century.

Thus wan Gamelyn his lond and his leede,
And wrak him of his enemys, and quyt hem here meede,
And sire Ote his brother made him his heir,
And siththen wedded Gamelyn a wyf bothe good and feyr;
They lyveden togidere whil that Crist wolde,
And sithen was Gamelyn graven under molde.
And so schal we alle, may ther no man fle:
God bryng us to the joye that ever schal be!

END OF VOL. I.

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